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A Case Study of Korean Girls' Constructions of Girlhood in a Kindergarten Class

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A Case Study of Korean Girls' Constructions of Girlhood in a Kindergarten Class

by

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Dedication

For Seihyun,

For the girls in Ms. Jung's class

For the girls who were students of my classes.

Acknowledgements

Unstartled, like a lion at sounds,
Unsnared, like the wind in a net,
Unsmeared, like a lotus in mud:
Wander alone a rhinoceros horn.

Throughout the process of this research project, I continuously meditated on the above quote from the "Sutta Nipata." Ironically, however, this project was not completed through my solitary efforts. Rather it has been socially constructed through interactions with various individuals. Here I would like to express my gratitude to the various individuals who gave of themselves to help me complete this project.

With sincere respect and gratitude, I thank the students and their families in Ms. Jung's class, Ms. Jung, and the administrators, faculty and staff of H kindergarten. Without their generous and brave decision to share their lives with a stranger, I would never have been able to understand girls' lives as I do now.

I am blessed with an incomparable dissertation committee who encouraged me to embrace the complexities and contradictories of Korean young girls' lives. Whenever I felt at a dead end, my advisor, Stuart Reifel, suggested profound insights that shed light on meanings within those dead ends. Within the intellectual space he created for me, I felt fearless to wander like a rhinoceros horn. I will always remember his thoughtful involvement in my work, exceptional patience, and sharing precious knowledge and resources. Also, I offer my special thanks to committee members Dr. Briley, Dr. Cary, Dr. Field, and Dr. Goldstein. Whenever they stated that this project would be valuable and significant, I regained the strength necessary to continue this project.

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I owe a great deal to a group of graduate students in the Thursday morning meetings at Café Medici and to the Korean graduate students in my program for their warm and supportive comments and well-articulated perspectives. I especially appreciate Euna, Hillary, Miwha, and Shelley who enthusiastically read my drafts and who made suggestions.

I feel immense gratitude toward several Korean friends who taught me the wonderful experiences of sharing lives with others. They always encouraged me to critically reflect on myself as a person and as a member of society and to be a better person.

My respect and gratitude need to be given to professors at Chung-Ang University and to the faculty of Chung-Ang University charter kindergarten. Without the time that I learned from them, I would never have known the joy and happiness of being with young children.

Thank you to Amanda and John for polishing my early and last drafts. Thank you to Pam, my Yoga instructor, for giving me peaceful moments. Thank you to the cleaning persons who cared for my library office.

Finally, I thank my family with all my heart and soul for their unconditional support and sacrifice. Even when I was suspicious of my ability to complete this project, they did not lose faith in me. My undying gratitude, love, and loyalty to you cannot be fully expressed.

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A Case Study of Korean Girls' Constructions of Girlhood in a Kindergarten Class

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This is a case study to explore Korean girls' construction of girlhoods in a kindergarten class in order to answer the two research questions: 1) What are the constructions of girlhood that emerge in a Korean kindergarten classroom? 2) How do the girls in the classroom negotiate the constructions of girlhood? Employing the conceptual framework of gender as being a social construction (Blaise, 2005; Davies, 2003; MacNaughton, 1997 & 2000; Thorne, 1993), I reconceptualize aspects of young girls' lives and behavior that for a long time have been regarded as insignificant, natural, and/or non-existent by mainstream ECE. The findings of this study will help fill a void in the current body of knowledge in Korean and Western ECE fields.

I completed data collection in one Korean kindergarten class of 5-year-olds, located in Seoul, Korea. I gathered data from five different sources: 1) field notes from

observations of students' speech and behavior; 2) audiotapes of students' conversations; 3) interviews with the students; 4) interviews with the classroom teachers; and 5) my research journals. Data analysis proceeded by searching for categories and codes following Strauss and Corbin (1998) in order to find emergent themes in relation to Korean girls' construction of girlhood.

By observing girls' talk and behaviors through a social constructionist perspective, I have uncovered three constructions of girlhood in one Korean kindergarten. They are appearance-based girlish girlhood, oppositional girlhood, and heteronormative girlhood. Before uncovering the girls' lived experiences that are constituted by and constitute the constructions of girlhood, I portray how these girlhoods came to take place in an institutional setting, emphasizing the institution's curriculum, guidelines, and teachers. I then go into detail about the three constructed girlhoods that emerged under these institutional conditions. The emerging girlhoods in the research setting were discursively constructed in relation to three pervasive and imperative ideas about being a girl. Although the three constructions are relevant to different aspects of life for a young Korean girl, they are not mutually exclusive or competitive. First, appearance-based girlish girlhood is constituted by and constitutes girls' bodies and bodily practices by correctly signifying their gender. Oppositional girlhood manifests itself in girls' everyday endeavors to maintain the legitimacy of the gender binary. Finally, heteronormative girlhood is a reflection of the pervasiveness of heteronormativity in Korean society at large.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Introduction

Yoon-su appears to be busy preparing food in a Little Tikes playhouse. She places a plastic shovel on top of the sink, turns, and peers outside the window before speaking to Dong-min (boy), who is standing beside her.

Yoon-su: ((*to Jae-hui*)) This is our house. ((*to Dong-min*)) Um... Hey, I'm a princess. You're my husband and I'm a beautiful princess.
. . .
Jae-hui: What are you guys playing?
Yoon-su: We're playing *Power Forces.*
Jae-hui: Then why do you want to be a princess?
Yoon-su: Girls are princesses and boys are, you know, servants… servants or fighters.
. . .
Jae-hui: Then what does a princess do?
Yoon-su: Then I just stay here. I watch boys fight through this window and tell them to hurry up and come back in, and I tell them it's dangerous and stuff. That's what a princess does.
Jae-hui: Can't girls be Power Forces?
Yoonsu: They [Power Forces] don't have any pretty princesses. I'm a princess and I will become Her Majesty when I get married. And because I'm married I have to stay home all the time.
Jae-hui: Does a princess have to get married?
Yoonsu: ((firmly)) YES.

When the Power Forces return home and state they are hot, Yoon-su begins to prepare tea.

(from the field notes on Oct, 07, 2005)

It is not uncommon, in early childhood institutions, to meet a girl like Yoon-su, who claims to be a pretty princess, a "wannabe bride," and a passive onlooker. As a teacher of young children, I often witnessed girls presenting themselves as stereotypical female characters in different narratives. Seeing such performances brought back my own memories of playing *Tarzan* and being a helpless Jane. Pretend play is not the only

sphere in which young girls are constructed and in turn construct girlhoods. Rather, young girls are discursively constructing gender in early childhood setting (Alloway; 1995; Davie, 2003; MacNaughton, 1997, 2000; Thorne, 1993; Walkerdine, 1990; Yelland, 1998). However, I failed to appreciate how gender discursively penetrates children's lives in the classroom. I was confused, disturbed, and, frankly, infuriated by students' recurring gendered practices, like Yoon-su's above. I told myself, with some relief, that gender was not what I had to be paying attention to every day. For many years I diverted my critical attention from my students' stereotypical constructions of gender.

My failure as a teacher of young girls could have been foreseen, partly, because of the disciplinary foundation of my teaching practices. The field of Early Childhood Education (ECE) has underestimated gender's presence and effect in and on young children's lives (Alloway, 1995; Yelland, 1998). In addition, the field has only recognized young children's gender from the perspective of development. I argue that this discipline-wide underestimation is due in part to the attention given exclusively to how young children learn/develop and how a teacher assists in their learning/development. MacNaughton (2000) even argues that the dominant field of ECE regards "gender as a minor concern in the 'main game' of educating young children" (2000, p. 2).

The lack of attention to young children's gender in the ECE field also stems from the dominant image of young children as innocent and immature, which has been strongly held by the ECE field. This dominant image of innocent and immature children hampered researchers who were attempting to explore young children in terms of certain

topics such as gender, sexuality, disease, poverty, and death (Robison & Díaz, 2006; Silin, 1995; Tobin, 2000; Walkerdine, 1990).

This dissertation is a case study of Korean girls' constructions of girlhood in a kindergarten class. I embarked on this study after reflecting on my previous years as a gender-blind teacher. Certain studies (Alloway; 1995; Davie, 2003; MacNaughton, 1997, 2000; Thorne, 1993; Walkerdine, 1990; Yelland, 1998) inspired me to bring gender to the fore to appreciate the practices of students in my classes and my teaching. By theorizing gender as a social construction, these ground-breaking studies contributed to deepening my understanding of young children's gender as a far more complex notion than I had previously imagined it was.

The critical reflection of my practices stimulated by the new framework on gender led me to explore what I had previously overlooked, underestimated, and abandoned: the significance of young children's gender in their lives. Although this study was initiated by my personal experience and reflection, the need for this study became obvious after looking at the contexts of the Korean and Western fields of ECE. In the following section, by examining the two discipline contexts in which Korean young children are situated, I present a case for why this study needs to be done now. I provide an overview portraying Korean females' lives before moving to the Korean ECE field. This is because the discussion of gender in Korean education has progressed and reformed itself to reflect a broader society (Min, M. S., 2002).[1] Understanding the dominant Korean issues

[1] When citing Korean authors with the same surname, I put surnames first and then the initials of their given names. According to American Psychological Association guidelines (APA) (2001), initials of given names should appear before the family name.

regarding females provides a chance to look at the context of Korean girls and the Korean ECE field. Though my focus is primarily on young girls' gender construction in kindergarten, the following two sections are predominantly relevant to gender equality/ equity, because gender equality/equity is the most obvious issue in discussions of Korean gender.[2]

Overview of Korean Females' lives

Among Korean females, no matter their differences in class, age, marital status, education, religion, and physical ability, one thing is held in common: the number two. The number two is the first digit of the second part of a Korean woman's citizen number; it signifies her gender.[3] Of course the rest of the Korean population holds in common the number one. I occasionally ask myself what meaning lies hidden, unspoken, in the

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However, in keeping with Korean culture, I stray from the APA publication manual's rules for naming authors. Likewise, I had hoped my name to appear as Yoon, Jaehui on the cover page. The University of Texas at Austin, however, did not accept the Korean custom of naming. As a result, my name, unlike other Korean authors named herein, appears as Jaehui Yoon.

[2] According to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology* (Turner, 2006), equality as described by feminist scholars is the liberal notion that designates equality of opportunity. Claiming equal access to important social institutions regardless of their gender is one example of equal opportunity. On the other hand, equity can be seen as equality of outcome. Indicating the remaining unequal practices of females despite having equal opportunity, feminist scholars insist on more active intervention, such as affirmative action or legislation, to create an egalitarian society.

[3] A citizen number is assigned to each individual by the government when her/his birth is registered.

number two? Could it be a ranking? Am I, and all other Korean women for that matter, second class citizens in the Republic of Korea?

I would suggest that in terms of discrimination and oppression there was a relatively long period of history when the number connoted exactly this. My query, however, has recently become controversial. As Korea has gone through a dramatic process of "urbanization, industrialization, military authoritarianism, democratic reform, and social liberalization" (Kendell, 2002, p. 1), Korean female life has also changed strikingly. During the last thirty years, there have been great efforts to abolish sexism in the legal, political, economic, and judicial domains, and these efforts have brought results. A legal and administrative system to support affirmative action for females has been established. Thus, many statistical indices signify rapid changes in Korean female lives. For instance, according to the Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2006), the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) for Korean women is ranked 25th .[4]

However, women's current status is not only the consequence of Korea's democratization and liberalization. Korean feminists have been behind these social reforms. Various women's groups and feminist scholars have struggled to eliminate sexism in public and private spaces since Korean females were first allowed to occupy the public sphere at the beginning of the last century. Directing their attention beyond the ivory tower, feminist scholars have also played a role in pushing the envelope of Korean

[4] UNDP publishes an annual report of Human Development Index (HDI) based on measurement of life expectancy, educational attainments, and adjusted real income. GDI is the specialized index of gender equality of each country with respect to elements of the HDI.

legal, economic, and cultural patriarchy (Cho, H. J., 2002). For instance, the demand for equal pay for equal work led, in 1988, to the passing of a legal guarantee of equal rights in employment. Korean feminist scholars created a rupture in Korean politics by calling attention to gender equality. In addition to their political accomplishments, feminist scholars have been leading the discussion on gender by offering classes on women's studies for undergraduates since the 1980s (Cho, H. J., 2002). Many young females have graduated from colleges and advanced into a variety of public sectors in Korean society. They have let their feminist voices be heard. Since then "feminism" and "gender" have not been strictly academic terms.

The persistent efforts of Korean feminists for gender equity have finally caused great leaps forward in the last two decades in terms of legal provisions for females. One such provision is an amendment to family law passed in February of 2005.[5] The amendment abolishes the status of the male as the head of the family, an arrangement that had been regarded as a final stronghold of Korean patriarchy and Confucian tradition. Under the previous law a female existed under the name of a male (either father, husband, or even a son). Regardless of her will and ability, she could not be independent but was legally compelled to be "subject" to a male family member. Although the head of the family is likely to receive symbolic and cultural status—even under the previous family law, a Korean female had legal status relatively compatible to a male—the status of the male in the family has functioned to psychologically and traditionally reproduce female subordination to males within familial structure.

[5] The new family law will be effective in 2008.

Although not all of the reforms at the macro-level in Korean society have brought direct improvements to the everyday lives of Korean females, the changes are encouraging. Across most public domains, current accomplishments of females reflect more gender-equal practices than in our grandmothers' and mothers' generation (Cho, H. J., 2002). Especially in education, female achievements are noticeable. For instance, in post-high school education, female enrollment is gradually increasing (the Korean Minister of Education and Human Resources [KMEHR], 2005). The 2005 annual report of educational statistics of KMEHR shows that females constitute 36.8% of undergraduate enrollment and 44.3% of graduate enrollment. Compared to 2000, the number of female administrators has also increased, albeit this fact is limited to elementary and middle schools.

Along with equal education rights, Korean feminists have continually raised the issue of gender equality related to qualitative aspects of education, such as educational policies, systems, and curricula (Hur, C. S., 2004; Kim, 2001; Lee, M. S., 2005). In response to social requests for gender equality, KMEHR has been striving since 1980 to establish a gender equality curriculum (Kim, Y., 2001). Furthermore, critical recognition of schooling as the institution that primarily reproduces gender inequality prompted feminist scholars to scrutinize the above mentioned aspects (Lee, M. S., 2005). The inequalities faced by females after receiving an education led feminist scholars to call for equity, rather than equality and for more engaging reform strategies (Hur, C. S., 2004).

I hope that this overview helps readers appreciate the multilayered context in which young Korean girls live. In addition, my historical positionality is also implicitly

illustrated in the above description. McRobbie (2000) notes that, "No research is carried out in a vacuum. The very questions we ask are always informed by the historical moment we inhabit—not necessarily directly or unambiguously, but in more subtle ways" (p. 121). This helps explain why I'm revisiting the subject of gender in young children seven years after leaving the classroom.

Departure from the Korean Field of ECE

Young children's gender emerged in the Korean field of ECE in the late 1990s, particularly in relation to equality/equity in early childhood institutions. Building upon this accumulated body of knowledge, three recent descriptive studies expand the current scope of the Korean ECE field (Kim, K. O., 2004; Park, S. Ya, 2001; Oh, K. H., 2005). In comparison to the work of individual scholars, the administrative level of the ECE field appears to be less sensitive to young children's gender. This point is noticed in the *6th Edition of Korean National Curriculum for Kindergarten* (1998) where gender is barely mentioned. [6] The closest connection is found in the area of physical health, specifically physical self-awareness and body movement. Considering recent modifications to the national curriculum that reflect changes in Korea's social and political situation—for instance, reunification—the fact that gender does not appear in the curriculum seems to attest to the dominant image of genderless children underpinning the Korean ECE field.[7]

[6] Although the *6th Edition of Korean National Curriculum for Kindergarten* was published in 1998, it wasn't put into effect until March 1, 2000.

[7] The Korean national curriculum clarifies the reunification of North and South Korea as a sub-content of one area of curriculum, social relationships.

The first large-scale study on unequal gender practices in an early childhood institutional setting for young children (Chung, H. S., Yang, A. K., & Kim, H. S., 1995) was done by the Korean Women's Development Institution (KWDI), which is government funded. This report contributed to raising the awareness of gender equality in the field of ECE. As a follow-up, KWDI developed and presented a program for education on gender equality for preschool children. Similar to KWDI's report, Yang, S. B (1993) points to young children's unequal gender practices in kindergarten by examining curriculum, educational materials, and teachers' sex-role stereotypes. [8]

Increasing interest in gender equality within and outside Korean education has guided individual scholars to explore young children's gender in the field of ECE. The introduction in the late 90s of anti-bias education based on Derman-Sparks (as cited in Lee, H. S. 2000) also pushed the Korean field of ECE to actively pay attention to gender as well as to race, class, and physical ability.[9]

Despite the increasing number of studies relevant to an understanding of the gender of young children, I find the current body of knowledge to be based on narrow

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[8] "Role" is a sociological term borrowed from the theater. It refers to "expectations about what behaviors are appropriate for a person holding a particular position within a particular social context" (Kessler & McKenna, 1985, p. 11). "Sex-role" therefore refers to the ways we expect women and men to behave. West and Zimmerman (1987) specify the limitations of conceptualizing gender as a role. From their perspective, the sex/gender role highlights only how an individual acquires and enacts a certain sex/gender role without consideration of the interlacing of gender with power and identity. Refer to West and Zimmerman's article (1987), *Gender Doing*.

[9] According to Lee, H. S. (2000), the inclusion of the anti-bias education approach in Korean ECE was a significant outgrowth of the social, political, and economic necessities imposed by globalization and internationalization.

epistemological and theoretical stances. The majority of gender studies were conducted based on the postpositivist epistemological position (Kim, K. O., 2004). [10] For instance, studies which investigate the effect of gender equality programs conduct pre-and post-tests and then compare the two quantified sets of data. Thus, the current body of knowledge produced in the Korean field mainly reports the positive effects of educational programs in decreasing young children's stereotypical sex/gender roles and their perceptions/beliefs (Kim, J. S. 2003; Moon, 2003; Sung, 1993; Woo, M. J. 1995). At the same time, many scholars, oriented by a socialization perspective on gender, examine the correlation—in terms of stereotypical sex roles—between significant care givers and children (Moo, H. S. 2001; Y, J. 2006).

However, I found a void in Korean ECE literature on young children's gender in school. Only few studies compared to those on gender equality observed the meanings of being either girls or boys in young children's everyday lives. Kim, K. O (2004), Oh, K. H. (2005) and Park, S. Ya. (2001) go into this area. Most available studies center on a discussion of children's short answers about their beliefs or perceptions of stereotypical gender roles. From my perspective, the narrow scope of the Korean ECE field in terms of young children's gender betrays a need for further discussion that embraces children's voices about being a girl or a boy.

[10] Positivism/postpositivism, according to Mertens (1997), claims one single reality. From the postpositivist perspective, the reality of the social world can be known in the same way as the natural world. Holding objectivity as "the standard to strive for in research" (p. 10), a postpositivist researcher is required to keep her/himself from values or biases.

In this section I locate the need of this study through examining the current Korean ECE field. First, the gradually increasing attention to the gender of young children implies the need for a study. Second, the rare inclusion of children's voices calls for adopting a different approach. The *Guidebook of Gender Equality Curriculum for Young Children* (2005), funded and distributed by KMEHR, is a source of encouragement in pursuing this research on young children's gender. Relying on the prevailing body of knowledge of children's gender studies, the guidebook elaborately indicates how the Korean ECE practice understands this topic. Also, as a starting point, the guidebook generates a space in which a broad range of scholars and practitioners can get involved in gender equality from their respective positions.

Departure from Developmentalism[11]

As mentioned above, the current literature on ECE is insufficient to help one understand young children's gender, especially regarding the ways that children construct and negotiate gender in their everyday lives. When compared to studies of other aspects of early childhood—children's development or learning—the dearth of research on this topic is clear. Ruble and Martin (1998) also take notice of the lack of academic attention to gender in reviewing gender studies in the area of child psychology. One reason for the limited attention to gender in the field lies in the dominant and somewhat deceptive image of young children as innocent beings. As the foundation of contemporary child-centered education (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998), the image of innocent children

[11] MacNaughton (2000) accounts for developmentalism as "the over-reliance on developmental ways of seeing children" (p. 73).

constrains researchers from linking young children to gender or sexuality (Cannella, 1997; MacNaughton, 2000; Robison & Díaz, 2006; Silin, 1995; Walkerdine, 1990, 1999). Consequently, the field of ECE, presuming gender-neutral children (Canella, 1997), has continually underestimated or overlooked the pervasiveness of gender in young children's lives.

The existing insufficiency stems from the prevailing notion in the ECE field of young children as "becoming" not "being" (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998). That is, the mainstream ECE field regards young children as immature humans who go through a developmental stage to reach adulthood. This image of developing children has caused the field to concentrate on "linear, sequential, and normalized" (Alldred, 1998, p. 150) developmental stages or levels. Many studies investigate where children are located in standard developmental stages or levels and how adults can push young children to attain the next level "faster." James, Jenks, and Prout (1998) even claim that some studies rarely address children at all. The emphasis on development in the field of ECE narrows the scope of gender studies to identify developmental differences in gender identification or sex/gender role-typing according to age.

The dominant images of children as innocent and developing in the field of ECE are reflected in the methods adopted by gender studies. According to MacNaughton (2000), the dominant ECE field legitimizes observation as "the (original) basis for knowing the child" (p. 96). Many studies, underestimating the ability of young children to recognize and articulate their perspective on gender, rely primarily on short-term observation of children's behavior. Even in studies that use interviews, researchers

attempt to hear children's responses only to questions or stimulations provided by the researchers, instead of actively listening to children's unprovoked perspectives on gender (Davies, 2003). As a result, the current body of knowledge hardly reveals anything profound about appreciating what it means to be a girl or a boy in a kindergarten.

Several studies substantively expand the current understanding of young children's gender in the field of ECE by locating gender at the center of kindergarten lives (Paley, 1984), making children's identity with gender (Gallas, 1997), uncovering the gender discourses operating in a kindergarten classroom (Blaise, 2005), theorizing children's togetherness and separation in playground (Thorne, 1993), highlighting young children's construction of gender in reading and interpreting feminist narratives (Davis, 2003), and discussing young children's oppositional gender construction in the gender binary (Francis, 1998). The theoretical frameworks of gender among these cutting edge studies vary widely. They are similar, however, in their common recognition of the significance of gender as the critical factor in shaping children's lives.

In literature that goes beyond developmentalism, feminist scholars who vigorously interact with post-structuralism present a new conceptual framework of gender as social construction (Davies, 2003; Francis, 1998; Jones, 1996; MacNaughton, 1994, 2000; Thorne, 1993; Skelton, 2000; Yelland, 1998). Moving beyond biological and social determinism, they highlight how young children constitute and reconstitute themselves as gendered beings in evolving processes.[12] The above studies give barely any

[12] Determinism is "a style of thinking in which all human action or experience is assumed to be directly caused" by the given prior conditions (Burr, 1998, p. 145). Therefore,

attention to what stage young children reach or how they differ from one another. In terms of research methodology, the authors of these studies are distinct from their predecessors. Based on the perspective that young children are active agents of gender construction in their own lives, the researchers generally adopt long-term observation of children's everyday contexts and listen carefully to their talk, which is where understandings of gender are embedded. Through such methods, the recent studies harvest more in-depth meanings of gender.

Bringing Korean Girls to the Center

Notwithstanding these cutting-edge studies, there are two areas still neglected in the field of ECE: young children in various cultures and an intensive analysis of girls in the kindergarten setting. First, many of the existing studies of young children's gender were done in English speaking countries (Australia, the UK, and the US). Therefore, they provide descriptions primarily of Caucasian children's gender construction. Only a small number of studies working with children from different cultures are internationally accessible through academic databases, such as Web of Science or ERIC. Even these, however, are about children of immigrant families or non-Caucasian children in Western societies (Connolly, 1998). Aside from Davis and Kasama's work (2004) on Japanese young children's gender construction, studies addressing the gender issues of children

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biological determinism refers to the idea in which gender roles have been exclusively and directly caused by physiological factors.

beyond the borders of Western countries are barely represented in the dominant body of literature in the ECE field.

Furthermore, the subject of early childhood girls is scarcely seen in emerging gender studies, reflecting the relative lack of attention given to girls. Ironically, even feminist scholars pay more attention to boys and discussions of masculinities in school (Jordan & Cowan, 1995; Skelton, 2000). This seemingly counterintuitive phenomenon may be due to the fact that many feminist researchers perceive dominant masculinity in the classroom as one reason for girls' disadvantages and focus their energies on analyzing and understanding it. Nevertheless, as a consequence of critical interest in boys' masculinity, many studies on gender end up putting boys at the center of the discussion. Furthermore, the social concern about boys' underachievement in Britain and in the U.S. has exacerbated the issue by fostering a "boys' turn" (Weaver-Hightower, 2003, p. 472) attitude in educational research.

I have described the on-going discussion of gender in two contexts in order to explain the need of this study: the Korean ECE field and the Western (dominant) ECE field. Recently, the Korean side has been giving its attention to young children's gender — more specifically, gender equality. The publication of the *Guidebook for Gender Equality Curriculum for Young Children* in 2005 by KMHER is, from my point view, an indication of an on-going discussion in a local context, and also a stimulus for further discussion. In order to expand and deepen the current discussion the Korean ECE field is in need of an exploratory study of Korean young children's gender. The lack of studies

from the perspective of gender as social construction in non-Western, early childhood contexts gives further evidence of a need for this research.

Research Questions of the Study

This study explores the following questions from the perspective on gender as social construction:

1. What are the constructions of girlhood that emerge in a Korean kindergarten classroom?
2. How do the girls in the classroom negotiate the constructions of girlhood?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it answers questions about the constructions of girlhood in a Korean kindergarten classroom. Employing the conceptual framework of gender as social construction (Blaise, 2005; Davies, 2003; MacNaughton, 1997, 2000; Thorne, 1993), I reconceptualize aspects of young girls that for a long time have been regarded as insignificant, natural, and/or non-existent by mainstream ECE. The findings of this study will help fill the void in the current body of knowledge in the Korean and Western ECE fields.

Introduction of Korean Kindergarten

I emphasize four aspects of Korean kindergarten education: 1) the demographics of Korean kindergartens; 2) the system of kindergarten education; 3) programs within the

Korean kindergarten; and 4) *The 6th Edition of Korean National Curriculum for Kindergarten* (1998). Although there are several types of licensed institutions besides kindergartens for the education or care of young children in Korea, I focus only on kindergartens to contextualize the research setting.

A Korean kindergarten is for 3-to-5 year-olds, 3-year-olds having been included since 1992. According to the national curriculum, the standard annual teaching period is 180 days or more and daily teaching hours are generally 180 minutes but can be adjusted according to age, developmental level, weather, season, and parental requests.[13] KMEHR reports that in 2006, 35.3 % of Korean young children from 3 to 5 were educated in licensed kindergartens. Breaking that number down, 53.2% of 5-year-olds were enrolled in licensed kindergartens, as were 34.6% of 4-year-olds and 15.8% of 3-year-olds. Considering that the cost of early childhood education is the responsible of each family, the level of enrollment in kindergarten indicates that, as a society, Korea recognizes the significance of early education. The enrollment of 5-year-olds reflects the social consensus that K-grade, at least, is a necessary educational foundation for a child's future education. In response to this situation, KMEHR has recently announced a plan to include 5-year-olds in the public education system (KMEHR, 2001).

Since they were established in the early 20th century, Korean kindergartens have been developed in the private sector (Lee, K. S., 1996). Because the Korean government only partially funds kindergarten education, it is not public education per se. Since 1962, however, the Korean government has administered and enforced regulations for

[13] A kindergarten school day ranges from 3 hours, the half-day program, to 8 hours, the all-day program.

kindergartens. Each kindergarten is licensed from the local office of the Ministry of Education. The certification of teachers of young children is also a function of the government; a kindergarten teacher in Korea gains her/his teacher certificate with a B.A. or A. A. in ECE. Local educational authorities annually inspect the quantifiable aspects of each institution—the ratio of students to teacher, the enrollment numbers, tuition, etc. (Kim, Y. S., 2001). In terms of curriculum management, teaching methods, or the children's learning, the Korean national curriculum offers general directions to organize, enact, and evaluate practices.

Korean kindergarten, as well as the entire field of ECE, has been influenced by Western philosophers and educators, like Rousseau, Montessori, Dewey, Piaget (Lee, K. S, 1996) and, recently, Vygotsky. Western influence is noticeable in the national curriculum for kindergarten. The national curriculum describes itself as "a child-centered curriculum" to promote the development of the autonomy and creativity of children. Commonalities between the national curriculum and the *Developmentally Appropriate Practice for Young Children* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) are found in their emphases on individuality and developmentally appropriate education.

As the authorized text published by KMEHR, the Korean national curriculum (1998) provides a framework for understanding Korean kindergarten practices. The curriculum determines significant aspects of the education of in-service teachers. Also, many educational materials based on the national curriculum are produced and distributed by the local authorities. Furthermore, commercialized educational materials also reflect the national curriculum. Not only used as a resource for daily practices in kindergarten,

the national curriculum provides a measure of the quality of education in Korean kindergartens. In addition, the *Guidebook of National Kindergarten Curriculum for Practitioners* (KMEHR, 1998) is used by teachers as a reference in making daily lesson plans (Won, S. H, 2002). According to Won, S. H. (2002), the guidebook is the basic resource for teachers to plan and organize their pedagogical practices because it offers specific examples of accomplishing the fundamental principles and the pedagogical objectives in the Korean national curriculum.

The Korean national curriculum acknowledges its emphasis on a child's interest, play, individuality, and integration (Lee, K. S., 2000). In fact, the advocacy of play and child-centeredness has been retained throughout the Korean national curriculum's five revisions. As previously noted, it also places an emphasis on children's autonomy and creativity rather than on academic achievement and teacher-directed activities (KMEHR, 2001). The Korean national kindergarten curriculum shares with the DAP an emphasis on age and individual differences in development, children's interests, play, and integration of activities.

The national curriculum defines its ideal student as "a well-rounded individual, a creative person with basic knowledge and skills, a creating new value person with an understanding of Korean traditional culture, and a person contributing to the community as a democratic citizen." [14] It then mentions five educational goals relevant to "five

[14] A "creating new value person with an understanding of Korean traditional culture," I interpret, is a harmonization of modern—in part, Western—values and traditional Korean values. Referring to Korean literature requires special consideration to translation. In most cases, I follow the authors' terminology if they provided an abstract in English or an English word in their definition of terms and underline the terminology. When an author

integrated areas" of the curriculum: physical heath, social relationships, expression, language, and inquiry. Each area of the curriculum includes sub-contents. Curriculum contents are divided into two levels with a view to developmental differences that exist within age groups. The curriculum states that the level is not necessarily age-specific; rather it should be considered in terms of continuity and appropriateness for children's cognitive development.

Although individual institutions reflect the Korean national curriculum in the way that they organize their pedagogical practices, the daily lives of young children in kindergarten cannot be generalized. In fact, each kindergarten builds its own particular practices by combining several educational approaches and also by responding to the needs of children and their families. I think that being mostly free from government intrusion brings flexibility to kindergarten educational practices—which may be a consequence of competition in the educational service business sector. Given the circumstances, each institution makes its own reforms through the adoption of new theories and programs.

Dissertation Outline

Here I outline the written text of my study. As stated before, I conducted a case study to explore Korean girls' construction of girlhoods in a kindergarten class. In Chapter One, I introduce the two questions guiding this research: 1) What are the

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did not specify her/his terminology, I translated terms by considering meanings from the text.

constructions of girlhood that emerge in a Korean kindergarten classroom? 2) How do the students and teachers in the classroom negotiate the construction of girlhoods? The rationale behind this study is explained in Chapter One. Chapter One also includes a brief introduction to Korean kindergarten education as well as a snapshot of Korean society in terms of gender. This is to give the reader an appreciation of where the participants and I have been situated.

Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature. Korean ECE literature on gender is explored, giving attention to the particularity of the Korean field. The dominant theoretical perspectives on gender are discussed. These include the biological, cognitive, socialization, and social construction perspectives. Gender studies of young children are also examined. In doing so, I aim to shed light on the prevalence of developmentalism in gender studies and the attention that isn't paid to children's voices. Chapter Two also includes girls' studies in order to connect this study with a broader academic discussion.

Chapter Three provides the details of methodology that informed this case study. Data collection was completed in one Korean kindergarten class of 5-year-olds, located in Seoul, Korea. Over 14 weeks, I gathered data from six different sources: 1) field notes from observations of students' speech and behavior; 2) audiotapes of students' conversations; 3) interviews with the students; 4) interviews with the classroom teachers; and 5) my research journals. Because participants in this study are Korean speakers, the verbal data recorded in the research field has been translated into English. Data analysis proceeded by searching for categories and codes following Strauss and Corbin (1998) in order to find emergent themes in relation to Korean girls' construction of girlhood.

Chapter Three also includes my reflection on the positionalities and ethics that I brought with me to the research setting.

Chapter Four addresses the themes emerging from Korean girls' lived experiences in a kindergarten class. In doing so, I respond to both research questions together with an explanation for the difficulty in separating the construction of girlhoods from their negotiation. Therefore, each theme is introduced with identifying data; it is then analyzed and interpreted. Instead of leaving out the inconsistencies and contradictions of girls' lived experiences, I include them to multiply and complicate our understanding of girlhoods. The themes that emerge are the girls' constructions of girlish, oppositional and heterosexual girlhoods.

Chapter Five discusses the findings from the locally constructed girlhoods in one Korean kindergarten classroom and offers several implications for future research. In doing so, I briefly revisit the study and consider, in particular, the need of the study, the theoretical perspective, the research questions, the collection and analysis process, and the participants. Then I answer the research questions with the findings of this case study. What follows are reflections on the findings of this study which are inconsistent with the literature, as well as reflections on my role in the research setting. I conclude with some suggestions for future directions for early childhood teachers, teacher educators, and future research.

Limitations of the Study

Every decision made in this study was accompanied with limitations. I address them here. The first limitation is due to its design—a case study. A case study can produce an in-depth description of the constructions of girlhood in a Korean kindergarten classroom. In this case, however, the small number of participants from relatively similar backgrounds of middle class families hampers its potential.

The findings of this study are contextually bounded in the research setting by reflecting on the localities, particularities, and specificities of the classroom culture. Despite a strong belief in the significance of kindergarten in young children's lives, I cannot deny that my decision to observe early childhood girls in an institutional setting was made out of consideration of their easy access. As a result, the findings demonstrate the construction of girlhoods in only one specific social setting. No doubt participants from other settings would form different constructions in response to the different environments.

Also, there is the time frame of the study. I stayed in the research setting for only one semester (from late August to December). Furthermore, it began five months after the school year had started.[15] Therefore, what I learned in the research setting could not reflect the continuous lives of students. Also, by intruding in the middle of the academic year, my presence was more visible and more stressful for the students. I think that a year-long stay would have given a deeper and more continuous understanding of the girls' lived experiences.

[15] The academic year in Korea starts in March.

This study was conducted at the same school I had worked at before as a teacher. This allowed me to easily pass through administrative gatekeepers. In addition, I was able to rebuild a collaborative relationship with the classroom teacher in a relatively short period of time. However, these previous relations influenced the way I researched. My presence in the classroom as a participant observer implicitly and explicitly influenced and altered participants' classroom lives. Moreover, my positionalities were deeply embedded throughout data collection and data analysis. Therefore, this study requires a reader's careful interpretation.

The girls' constructions of girlhood outlined below were observed mostly in public. As a researcher responsible for protecting the participants' privacy, I paid attention to whether I was trespassing on the girls' private spaces. I believe that as I stayed longer and became a familiar stranger to the girls, I had more chances to be accepted by the girls. However, as many researchers (Connolly, 2000; Boyle et al., 2003; Hey, 1997; McRobbie, 2000) have experienced, the girls tended to be protective and reserved. As a result, my interpretation and analysis was unable to cover their constructions of girlhood in more private and intimate spaces.

Finally, I intentionally paid attention to girls hoping to capture in-depth meanings and to avoid dichotomized ways of thinking through unexpected and unconscious comparison (Shin, Y. B., 2005). Considering the fact that gender is relational (Connell, 2002), what I observed in the research setting was very partial and fragmented.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

I here briefly discuss the literature relevant to Korean girls' construction and negotiation of their girlhoods in order to 1) clarify the conceptual framework of gender that underpins this study and 2) position this research in the current academic discussion of girls. In order to achieve these two goals, I begin with a review of Korean literature on young children's gender, specifically on gender equality. Then, I explore the four perspectives on gender that frequently appear in the literature. These are: the biological perspective, the socialization perspective, the cognitive perspective, and the social constructionist perspective. Then, I direct the focus to studies of gender in the field of ECE because there is a dearth of studies on girls in this field. Finally, I present a review of studies about preadolescent or adolescent girls in and outside school. In reviewing the relevant literature, I also highlight the methodological distinctiveness of each study caused by its own theoretical perspective on gender.

Korean Gender Studies in the ECE field

Studies accessible through databases of the Korean National Library and Korea Education and Research Information are thoroughly reviewed here. Dissertations, theses, or journal articles published in the Korean ECE field in the last two decades were mainly searched for by employing keywords like "young children," "ECE," "EC," "gender," "sex," and "sex/gender role." Most accessible empirical studies on gender research view

gender from the positivist perspective, grounded in socialization or cognitive theory (Kim, K. O., 2004). From my point of view, the existing Korean ECE literature can be largely grouped into two areas: 1) studies to investigate gender role attitudes or perceptions of gender socialization agents such as mothers, teachers, and storybooks, and 2) studies to look into the effect of educational inputs to lessen children's reliance on sex-role stereotypes. After detailing each area, I discuss significant texts to understand the on-going discussion about young children's gender in the Korean ECE field: the *Guidebook of Gender Equality Curriculum for Young Children* (KMEHR, 2005).

As mentioned above, the feminist institution KWDI contributed to raising the awareness of gender equality in the Korean ECE field. In 1995, KWDI (Chung, H. S., Yang, A. K., & Kim, H. S., 1995) presented a report on the influences of early childhood institutions on the teaching and learning of gender roles. Three methods were used: survey, content analysis, and participant observation. In the report, the researchers first state the current practice of enacting gender role education in early childhood institutions. This was drawn from questionnaires filled out by the faculty and administrators of the institutions. Based on the answers from early childhood teachers, the researchers designated young children's stereotypical gender roles. According to the teachers, young children demonstrated gendered play preferences, sex discrimination, and gendered attitudes or propensities. From an examination of teaching materials and storybooks, the researchers discovered an imbalance between the frequency of appearances of female and male characters in those texts. Furthermore, they noticed a trend of stereotypical descriptions of female characters in the domestic sphere.

Yang, S. B. (1993) detailed the socialization of sex discrimination in kindergarten education through observation, survey, and content analysis of educational materials. The researcher inspected educational materials produced by private companies and the KMEHR (1991). The results of content analysis with respect to how each sex is described in pictures and in story narratives points to the existence of sexism. Materials (books, songs, and picture materials for discussion) for children and guiding materials for teachers appear to reinforce traditional femininity (obedience, passivity, and weakness) and masculinity (aggressiveness, independence, activity, and initiative). Also, these materials solidify the dominant image of the mother by emphasizing dedication to and sacrifice for the family. That is, educational materials used in kindergarten education can be said to normalize certain types of femininity and to legitimize compulsory heterosexuality. Also, individual teachers demonstrate stereotypical beliefs by believing gender difference in learning. Teachers frequently designate students by dividing them into groups of girls and boys. The binary stereotypes of sex roles are encouraged as more desirable attributes.

As mentioned earlier, there are two threads of discussion from the current accessible literature in the Korean ECE field. Here I focus on studies investigating various agents in young children's gender socialization: mothers (Kim, J. S., 2004; Lee, C. J. 1998; Jang, J. 2004), teachers (Yeom, J. 2006 Lee, J. O., 1999; Yoo, E. J. & Kim, J. O., 2003), and storybooks (Cho, J. R. 2000; Kim, H. Jb. 2002; Won, S. H. 2002). Jang, J. (2004) observed the correlation between stereotypical sex role understandings of 114 5-year-olds and their mothers. For this, Jang looked into the children's play preferences in a

kindergarten classroom through short-term observation. Then, the children were questioned by the researcher in order to measure their sex-role stereotypes individually. The researcher surveyed the mothers' sex-role stereotypes and also interviewed them to clarify their preferences of appropriate play for their children. Both groups—children and their mothers—showed preferences for sex-appropriate play. A mother's preference for play was positively related to her child's play preference. The findings indicated a correlation between the mothers' preferences of sex-role appropriate play and their educational levels and incomes. However, sex-role stereotypes in both groups were not correlated to their play preference for sex-appropriate play.

Yeom, J. (2006), grounded in a discussion of mothers' and teachers' significant roles in developing a child's gender, studied differences between their attitudes toward gender roles and gender equality education. Also examined was whether their attitudes about gender roles correlated with their attitudes toward gender equality education. From a survey, the researcher found that early childhood teachers had more non-stereotypical attitudes of gender roles than mothers. Non-stereotypical gender role attitudes were more likely to indicate more supportive attitudes toward gender equality education in both groups of participants. Based on the findings, the researcher implied the need to closely inquire into mothers' and teachers' attitudes about gender roles.

Park, S. Yb. (2005) surveyed the consciousness of gender equality among parents of toddlers. She looked at various aspects—the family, their jobs, education, social and cultural life. Also, the researcher observed whether parents' consciousness of gender equality was related to how much they agreed with the need for equal education for their

children. The findings indicate that mothers have a higher consciousness of gender equality than do fathers. The parents with a higher consciousness of gender equality support gender equal education for their children. The researcher argues for the need to design parent education programs. Park, S. Yb. calls for a more active enactment of gender equal education programs that will respond to parents' needs.

Lee, J. O. (1999) and Yoo, E. J. and Kim, J. O. (2003) examined gender role perceptions and attitudes in early childhood teachers in claiming the need to develop in-service teacher training programs. Both studies commonly reported that early childhood teachers recognized gender difference in children's play preferences. However, early childhood teachers in both studies demonstrated inconsistent intervention in children's gendered play practices. From the findings indicating children's conformation to stereotypical gender roles in early childhood settings, the researchers maintain the need to develop gender equality programs and to include gender equality in pre-and in-service teacher training programs.

Storybooks for young children have been discussed in many Korean studies in terms of gender stereotype socialization. Besides this, many Korean scholars seemed to regard storybooks as curriculum content (Kim, K. O., 2004). Won, S. H. (2002) scrutinized stories from the fifth and sixth edition of the guiding material for kindergarten educational activities. Because the guiding material is published to incorporate the national curriculum in individual classrooms by the state authority, KMEHR, it is a barometer for the current state of the national curriculum in relation to gender. To analyze sex roles in stories from the guiding material, she looked at a number of characters

according to their sex, activities, and occupations. First, the findings suggested an imbalance in the number of main characters according to sex in texts and pictures. Second, female characters were frequently described in domestic settings doing passive, supportive, and caring activities. Third, in terms of themes, female main characters frequently appeared in stories with family love themes. Finally, female characters were still portrayed as housewives more often than anything else. From the findings of Won, S. H (2002), it is safe to assume that the Korean national curriculum contributes to normalizing stereotypical femininity through frequent descriptions of females positioned within compulsory heterosexuality.

In spite of her broad analytic framework, Kim, H. Jb. (2002) disclosed bias related to gender in nursery tales frequently used by kindergartens. From nursery tales selected by early childhood teachers, she selected 13: seven originally written in Korean and six translated. Her analysis of them implies that the storybooks include elements of prejudices regarding beliefs, abilities, appearances, genders, ages, and classes. Also, traditional Korean storybooks appear to be more prejudicial than both the translations and the modern Korean storybooks.

Cho, J. R. (2000) analyzed sex-role stereotyping in children's picture books, published in Korea. She selected 30 books, 15 Korean and 15 translated, from lists of bestselling children's books with the stipulation that the main character is human. She focused on five different aspects of sex-role stereotypes: frequency of appearances, main themes, types of occupations, and types of activities. The findings support previous similar studies in the Korean ECE field in relation to the imbalanced appearance of each

sex (more often male) and stereotypical occupations of characters. Cho also found that female main characters seemed to represent aspects of relationships (filial devotion, fraternal affection, civility, respect for human beings). Stereotypical femininity as passive, dependent, weak, and calm, etc. was frequently illustrated in children' books with stereotypical masculinity. Comparatively, deviant masculinity was accepted or understood by others. Deviant femininity was described as ugly and was ultimately punished. In general, the findings of Cho's study support previous studies completed in the last two decades. Considering the dramatic changes related to gender equality in the Korean public sphere, what she reports seems to indicate rigidity in the normalized way of being a girl/boy in Korean society.

Yang, J. A. (2000) investigated the influences of variables related to parenting in Korean children's sex orientation. Through a survey of 10- and 11-year-old children and their parents, Yang explored the correlation of children's sex-typing with fathers' masculinity, mothers' femininity, and two aspects of fathering (warmth, involvement, and task sharing). Only the daughters' femininity appeared to be significantly correlated with their fathers' masculinity. Except for this, the researcher did not find a significant relationship. She addresses the need to consider various factors in forging children's sex-typing such as father-mother relations, peer influences, surrogate models, and interactions or power relations among all family members. In explaining the significant influence of the fathers' masculinity compared to the mother's femininity on the daughter's femininity, she considers the influence of Confucianism, which has been deeply embedded in Korean society. According to her, because the male is dominant in family relations in a

Confucian society, the father is more influential than a mother on children. In spite of her meaningful interpretation that situated children's sex-typing in a broad social and cultural context, she did not, I believe, pay enough attention to the heterogeneity of Korean society.

The other group of studies of Korean young children aims to lessen children's stereotypical gender roles through educational inputs, in order to promote more equity (Kang, S. 1999; Kim, Y. S. 2003; Moon, J. 2003; Kim, Y. R., 2004). Therefore, they provide educational inputs and investigate the effects of the inputs by comparing pre-and post-test studies of children's perceptions or attitudes toward gender roles. Kim, Y. S. (2003) reports on a transformation of children's stereotypical perception of sex roles through the Sex-Fairness Education Program, designed by KWDI (2000). The program includes six different themes: knowing the physical features of sexes, holding non-stereotypical occupations, participating equitably in house labor, valuing the opposite sex, and developing the capability to criticize stereotypes. For instance, Kim, Y. S. (2003) provides activities to make 26 5-year-old children of both genders experience housework, which is regarded as female duty. That is, the program is mainly designed to provide experiences of non-stereotypical gender roles. The result of comparing pre-and post-tests of children's sex roles, according to the researcher, supports the positive effects of the program in changing children's sex-role stereotypes. However, even after the program children selected stereotypical activities and adult occupations in their responses to the question, "what will you do now and in the future?" The researcher analyzed the effect of

the educational program on children's perceptions of stereotypical sex-roles, but not on children's stereotypical preference for activities.

Kim, J. S. (2003) researched the effects of an androgyny equality program with five-year-old children. The androgyny equality program was reorganized based on the literature and on a previously published program by the Korean researcher. The program was organized around six subjects about which children frequently demonstrated stereotypical beliefs: occupation, color, play materials, housework, parenting, and sex roles perception (need to find a English word from her abstract). Sex-role stereotypes were examined with two groups of children. After six weeks, the researcher conducted a post-test. The findings suggested that the experimental group of children was likely to display mitigated stereotypes across the six subjects. Based on the findings, the researcher supports the previous literature's claim of a positive effect that educational treatment has in making changes to children's sex-role stereotypes.

Anti-bias story books were frequently selected by researchers as educational inputs. Kindergartners listened to an anti-biased story book once a week over ten weeks (Moon, J., 2003). Then, they did two activities relevant to each story, which were designed to alter children's gender-role stereotypes. As a result of the comparison between pre- and post-tests, the researcher found significant differences in children's stereotypical sex-roles. In addition to anti-bias story books, the program for gender equality for preschoolers developed by KWDI was conducted and the effects measured.

The Korean ECE field, responding to social changes and internal, as well as external, demands that began in the 1980's (Kim, Y., 2001), published the *Guidebook of*

Gender Equality Curriculum for Young Children in 2005. The guidebook proclaims the need to develop a gender equality curriculum in the Korean ECE field that is based on constitutional rights, social justice, and political, economic, and social demands. As had been shown in previous relevant studies, the guidebook emphasizes children's development and their future, rather than their everyday experiences of, gender. Drawing on Bem (1974), the guidebook establishes its purpose as helping children grow up as androgynous persons who possess masculine and feminine features (No, H. K., 1997). [16] To this end, the guidebook firmly calls for "active enactment of a gender equity program" and "intervention and interference" in young children's sexist practices.

In order to lessen children's stereotypical thinking and behaviors and encourage them to become more androgynous—having masculine and feminine traits--the guidebook suggests curriculum content and activities. The suggested content includes: knowing the physical features of females and males, recognizing the value of an opposite gender, demonstrating equal play practices, having equal gender roles in the family, knowing non-stereotypical occupations, and developing the ability to criticize and deal with sex discrimination. The activities mentioned in the guidebook intend to provide

[16] Bem (1974) offers the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) based on the critique of the previous measurement of masculinity and femininity in light of conceptualization of masculinity and femininity as two poles of one spectrum . She also questions their association with biological categories. In fact, BSRI measures the desirability of masculine, feminine, and neutral psychological traits for an individual and locates her/him in one of categories (androgynous, masculine, feminine, and neutral) according to her/his combination of M and F scores. According to Bem, androgynous as a balance of both masculine and feminine is the most desirable type. In spite of her effort to de-pathologize non-stereotypical femininity or masculinity, her theory has been critiqued in that it does not fully consider the material and power relations between females and males. However, Bem (1983) would display the withdrawal of androgyny; instead, she emphasizes gender aschemata based on gender schema theory.

opportunities for students to experience non-stereotypical gender roles and, ultimately, to possess androgynous gender roles. For instance, the guidebook suggests washing dishes for a dramatic center to give everyone an opportunity to participate in housework. The adopted strategies in the guidebook tend to be aligned with a liberal feminist perspective in that they are designed with the purpose of "re-socialising the traditionally gendered individual to become finally and coherently non-traditionally gendered" (MacNaughton, 2000, p. 142). Beyond introducing activities to promote gender equality in the classroom, the guidebook includes materials for parents and a checklist for teachers to help them recognize unequal aspects of gender in their teaching practices.

The field of ECE has made constant efforts in relation to gender studies of young children from the cognitive and socialization perspectives. This point is also noted in a textbook used in the children's social development course for undergraduates in ECE (Kim et al., 1998). They emphasize numerous socialization agents surrounding young children, such as parents, peers, teachers, toys, books, etc.

I have reviewed in this section the Korean ECE field literature on young children's gender, emphasizing two areas recognized therein: gender role socialization agents (mothers, teachers, and storybooks) and the impact of educational programs on decreasing stereotypical gender roles adopted by young children. The *Guidebook of Gender Equality Curriculum for Young Children* is also closely reviewed.

Notwithstanding the contribution of the existing literature in Korea, several disconnections should be discussed. Most Korean studies were developed based on positivist or post-positivist perspectives (Jung, Y. A. & Kim, K. O., 2003). They tended

to pay more attention to adults' attitudes or perceptions of gender roles instead of to young children's. This imbalanced attention can be explained by the researchers' theoretical perspective on gender, the socialization perspective. Also, even though they focus on young children, they tend to treat young children as passive objects of study: scrutinized, tested, and measured (Alldred, 1998; Burman, 1994). Therefore, they show reliance on short-period observation or structured questions. But, from my perspective, this is also the reflection of the dominant image of young children as "becoming" not as "being" in the Korean ECE field. Finally, Korean literature—to the extent that it was accessible to me—refers to gender with an emphasis on the future, rather than on children's lived experiences.

However, recently published studies in the Korean ECE field move beyond the limitations that frequently appear in the previous studies. Four qualitative studies (Hyun, E. S. & Choi, D. H, 2002; Kim, K. O., 2004; Oh, K. H., 2005; Park, S. Ya, 2001) of young children's gender socialization are inspiring in terms of expanding the scope and depth of the current discussion on young children's gender. [17] Through extended observation and close interaction with young children, these studies spotlight how gender operates in young children's everyday lives in early childhood institutions.

Oh, K. H. (2005) researched the gender socialization of young children through participant observation in two different daycare centers. In comparing the practices of the two daycare centers, she spotlighted how young children's gender socialization becomes

[17] These studies gather verbal data from participant observation, interviews, and content analysis. However, from my understanding, they tend to attempt to make a truth claim. Considering this, they would be said as postpositivist studies.

classed. At first, she looked at the socialization that occured between young children and teachers. The two teachers that she observed appeared to take contradictory roles in gender socialization. Despite conscious efforts to discuss gender equality such as the topic of non stereotypical occupation, they reproduced stereotypical gender expectations: physically strong boys and weak girls. Also, the researcher pointed out that equal treatment of children by teachers provokes gender invisibility. Acknowledging children as active beings in their socialization, she scrutinized how each group of children constituted gendered culture with their peers. Children in both groups displayed gendered practices with respect to preferred play types, group organization, and choices of materials. She also mentions that young children participated in heterosexual practices by claiming to have an opposite sex peer.

Park, S. Ya. (2001) discusses young children's gender awareness and sex-role stereotypes in one Korean kindergarten class of 4-year-olds. By adopting ethnographic methods, she provides more descriptive information about young children's gender. She found that most Korean 4-year-olds develop gender-identity and stability as defined by Kohlberg. Established gender awareness, according to the researcher, distinguishes young children from other gender peers. Park indicates, however, that there is no strict gender separation; rather it happens contextually. Young children's sex-role stereotypes are formed in the ideal image of femininity (prettiness) and masculinity (physical power)—both contextually established. In addition to peer pressure and adult encouragement, self-regulation helps to reproduce sex-role stereotypes in a kindergarten classroom. Some indicators of children's sex-role stereotypes include preferences for play materials and

colors, as well as a child's expectation of her/his future occupation. Although young children in the study tended to organize daily practices according to sex-role stereotypes, they also demonstrated active and passive resistances to sex-role stereotypes. Park asserts that young children's behaviors that deviate from stereotypical sex-roles stimulate gender equality thinking in the classroom.

Kim K. O. (2004) observed the sex-role socialization of Korean infants (aged 2 to 4) in a day care center. From the socialization perspective, she focused on infants' shaping sex-roles through interactions with teachers and peers. The findings illustrated that stereotypical sex-roles (active vs. sedentary, aggressive vs. unselfish, and accomplishment-oriented vs. appearance-oriented) are discursively socialized in toddlers' play, in particular pretend play, and teachers' explicit and implicit pedagogical activities. According to Kim's observation, Korean girls tended to be socialized as appearance-oriented, especially in the case of 4-year-old girls. Girls' orientation to appearance was, at first, observed from their wearing various types of accessories. The pretty appearances of the girls were reinforced and intensified by peers and moreover by early childhood teachers. The researcher also indicated the girls' strong preferences for princesses—in the terms of the researcher, girls' imitation of and identification of themselves with princesses—as one of the girls' appearance-oriented practices. Indicating aggressive marketing strategies toward young children, Kim, K. O. (2004) remarks that socialization of girls' appearance-oriented practices happens through the media.

Hyun, E. S. & Choi, D. H. (2002) explored children's perceptions related to play in order to explore how young children's (ages 3 to 6) gender-doing and gender-bending

is reflected in their perceptions of play. [18] 84 children and 4 teachers from Korea and the U.S. participated in this study. The researchers analyzed young children's verbal responses in group discussions regarding various aspects of play (i.e. preference, partner, gender differences, etc.) that were facilitated by teachers. Additionally, the researchers gathered children's drawings that showed play patterns and frequent play partners and observed children in their classrooms. Also, they interviewed classroom teachers. Children in both cultures illustrated clear awareness of gender differences in play: gendered play preferences, patterns, and separated play practices. Despite the dominance of gender doing—according to the researchers, the expression of gendered based characteristics --children in both cultures also mentioned the practices of gender-bending: non-stereotypical play preferences or play with opposite gender peers. Korean children, in particular boys, tended to be strict in gender-doing; Hyun, E. S. & Choi, D. H. interpret this as the emphasis of Korean culture on "getting gender right" (p, 63). For girls, in both cultures in which girls are encouraged to establish non-traditional gender-stereotypes and behaviors, gender-bending appears more frequently.

The Korean literature on the gender of young children, I can say, has been established, corresponding to the gender equality discussion inside and outside the ECE field. The majority of studies contribute to the body of knowledge by employing the socialization perspective on gender. Compared to previous studies, the recent studies

[18] Gender-doing in the study of Hyun, E. S. & Choi, D. H. tends to specifically denote young children's reproduction of culturally established ideas of gender: therefore, partially traditional and stereotypical gender ideas compared to West and Zimmerman (1987). Reconceptualizing gender as "something we are continuously doing" in everyday relationships with others, not as "something we have," West and Zimmerman highlight the contextuality of gender.

expand and deepen the on-going discussion by providing descriptions of young children's gender socialization in early childhood institutions and admitting children's active role in their gender socialization.

Theoretical Perspectives on Gender in the field of ECE

The major theoretical perspectives that repeatedly appear in inquiries are the biological perspective, the socialization perspective, the cognitive perspective, and the social constructionist perspective (Alloway, 1995; Burr, 1998; Davies, 2003; Kessler & McKenna, 1978; MacNaughton, 2000; Thorne, 1993). Despite the difficulty I had finding a study informed by the biological perspective, I include this perspective because developmental psychology regards the biological perspective as one of the major perspectives on gender development (Ruble & Martin, 1998). Each theoretical perspective provides a different framework for understanding and investigating gender. What follows is an outline of these perspectives and a description of how each guides an empirical study.

Biological Perspective

The biological perspective accounts for the observable and measurable discrepancies between females and males as outward expressions of biological codes (Burr, 1998; Fausto-Sterling, 1992; Kessler & McKenna, 1978; O'Brien, 1992). Recently, more subtle biological factors—such as chromosomes, hormones, and genes—as well as physical differences, have been referred to as the causes for gender differences (Alloway,

1995). Despite the increasing emphasis on social contexts in human behavior, the biological perspective is still dominant and pervasive due to the shared assumption in society that biological forces are powerful and their effects are immutable (Burr, 1998). Moreover, Burr indicates the association of the naturalness of gender difference with moral imperatives in a society. That is, from the biological perspective, gender differences as the outward expressions of natural drives and predispositions should be more desirable and valuable.

In reviewing studies informed by the biological perspective, Ruble and Martin (1998) cite recent attention to hormones and brain structure. Androgen, according to them, has been discussed as the biological cause to differentiate reproductive organs in the prenatal phase and to stimulate the second phase of sex differentiation. Also, many studies find a relationship between androgen and aggressive behavior. Pellegrini and Smith (2003) call for consideration of androgen's effect on boys' aggressive rough-and-tumble play by examining studies on animals or naturally occurring human cases.[19] Ruble and Martin (1998) also review studies on the influences of hormones in the development of brain structure and that function as gender differences: in particular, hormones and brain specialization.

In order to dismantle the myths of biological accounts of gender, many feminist scholars point out the flaws and limitations inherent in them (Burr, 1998; Kessler &

[19] O'Brien (1992) similarly address that the biological perspective has been established by drawing "largely from animal studies and a few human investigations" (p. 326).

McKenna, 1978; Fausto-Sterling, 1992). Kessler and McKenna (1978) thoroughly describe the impact of biological factors on gender assignment, gender identity, and gender roles, which are the significant aspects of gender.[20] According to them, biological factors influence gender attribution but have a tenuous connection to gender identity or gender roles. Kessler and McKenna assert that biological factors function as signs of gender, rather than as its foundations. In addition, Kessler and McKenna maintain that the popular concept of dichotomized gender in society directs researchers to highlight, in their biological inquiries, inter-group differences and to overlook intra-group differences (Ruble & Martin, 1998).

Fausto-Sterling (1992), a feminist scientist, scrutinized previous studies supporting the significance of biological factors in gender differences. Through exhaustive examination, she unearthed faulty data collection methods, exaggerations of one-sided findings that highlight gender difference, and inaccurate analysis of statistical findings. Based on the results of her examination, she points out the unreliability of existing studies in proving the biological foundation of gender differences. Fausto-Sterling asserts that biological processes should be investigated with regard to complexity, holism, and interaction, rather than being simplified into causal relationships.

[20] Gender assignment refers to "a special case of gender attribution which occurs only once" (Kessler & McKenna, 1985, p. 8) based on the inspection of the genitals by medical personnel.

Socialization Perspective

Socialization, according to Maccoby (1998), is "the set of processes in which each generation of adults passes along to . . . children the fund of knowledge, beliefs, and skills which constitutes the culture of the social group" (p. 3). Therefore, through socialization processes facilitated by adults, children come to be prepared for playing future roles. To put this in terms of gender socialization, children gradually come to acquire typical or valued behaviors or attributes of their sexes in order to pursue their future roles as adults, through repeated interactive encounters with various socialization agents. Maccoby (1998, 2000) states that socialization agents are directly or indirectly engaged in children's sex-typing. These two types articulate children's sex-typing based on different theories. The direct socialization perspective is based on stimulus-response
(S-R) principles, while the indirect socialization is accounted for through social learning theory (O'Brien, 1992).

From the direct socialization perspective, children become sex-typed through consistent and repeated reinforcement and punishment via socialization agents (i.e., parents, sibling, peers, and teachers). For instance, because of positive or negative consequences of displayed behaviors, girls shape stereotypical feminine behaviors and eliminate certain other behaviors regarded appropriate for boys. On the other hand, the indirect socialization emphasizes observational learning as a powerful influence on gender socialization. On top of direct reinforcement and punishment, Mischel (1966) says that children can learn sex-typed behaviors through vicarious reinforcement. That is, in spite of the non-existence of direct reinforcement from socialization agents, children

adopt behaviors of other children that are positively reinforced. Moreover, after identifying themselves with same-sex parents or same-sex peers, children can learn certain behaviors even without the positive or negative consequences of the behaviors.

The broad range of socialization agents are mentioned from the socialization perspective. However, socialization agents, regardless of the various ways in which they are engaged in children's gender socialization, are similar in that they unidirectionally influence young children. According to Maccoby (1998), the direct socialization perspective strives to understand the impact of immediate socialization agents (parents, siblings, peers). The statement of observational learning in the indirect socialization perspective draws attention to how the cultural media (TV, movies, toys, costumes, and books) models gender roles and conduct (Bussey & Bandura, 1998).

The socialization perspective, according to Bem (1983) and Martin (2005), undergirds strategies to lessen children's stereotypes as recommended by liberal feminism. This perspective allows resistance to biological determinism and conceives of gender as modifiable through well-planned reinforcement and punishment, which is enough to offer substantial ground for designing strategies to rear children as astereotypical or gender-neutral. As Davies (2003) puts it, "in sex-role socialization theory the biological basis of sexual difference is assumed, and the 'roles' that children are taught by adults are a superficial social dressing laid over the 'real' biological difference. (Davies, 2003, p. 5)

Although socialization recognizes gender in a social context, it fails to explicate the complexity of the interactions between children and the socialization agents. By

conceptualizing children as passive recipients, the socialization perspective pays exclusive attention to the unidirectional influence of the socialization agents on the child (Alloway, 1995; Burr, 1998; Davies, 2003; MacNaughton, 2000; Thorne, 1993). That is, gender socialization is an "unproblematic transformation" (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 89). This narrow focus prevents researchers from recognizing children's resistance to gender/sex roles provided by socialization agents. Thus Davies' study (2003) illustrates young children's resistance toward storybooks, which are regarded as gender socialization agents. Furthermore, like the biological perspective, the socialization model is deterministic and reductionist in that it attributes the origin of the current gendered phenomena to one source (Burr, 1998). [21]

Cognitive Perspective

Cognitive perspectives on gender, cognitive-developmental theory and gender schema theory (Bem, 1983; Martin, Ruble, & Szkrybalo, 2002; Martin & Ruble, 2004), argue that the central role of cognition is as "an organizer and motivator" (C. Martin, Ruble, & Szkrybalo, 2002, p. 913) of children's sex-consistent behaviors and thinking. The emphasis on "the child's active structuring of his own experiences," (Kohlberg, 1966, p. 85) from a cognitive perspective distinguishes it from biological and social determinism. Despite shared ground on cognition and their emphasis on children's active

[21] Reductionism, according to The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology (2006), is the term that means the over-simplified way of thinking to claim that a limited number of constituent components makes up the whole. For instance, the socialization perspective insists that existing gender roles are constructed by the previous history of reinforcement and observation.

role, cognitive-developmental theory and gender schema theory explain distinctive aspects of gender development: the developmental stage of gender constancy and the process of acquisition of gender-stereotyped knowledge or behaviors.

Cognitive-developmental theory is introduced by Kohlberg (1966). In his chapter, *A cognitive-developmental analysis of children's sex-role concepts and attitudes* (Maccoby, 1966), Kohlberg insists that children's sex-role identities are the product of basic cognitive growth. By applying Piaget's ideas to gender, Kohlberg presents the perspective on age-related and universal developmental stages of sex-role attitudes and values (Bem, 1983; Kohlberg, 1966; Martin, Ruble, & Szkrybalo, 2002; C. Martin & Ruble, 2004). Kohlberg argues that gender identity is the basic organizer of sex-role attitudes (p. 164). Evolved from an awareness of physical differences, gender identity causes children to value and to prefer things consistent with their sexes. Because of the established feminine-masculine value system, children identify themselves with same-sex others and attempt to imitate same-sex others. At this point, Kohlberg presents the oppositional perspective from the point-of-view of socialization, which claims that children's imitation precedes gender identification. He states, however, that children can not have a gender identity until they acquire gender constancy, which is one of the conservation concepts.

Gender constancy, according to Kohlberg (1966), develops similarly to concrete-operational conservation. It maintains that there are three sequential stages of gender constancy: gender identity, gender stability, and gender consistency (Martin, Ruble, & Szkrybalo, 2002; Warin, 2000). As s/he reaches age 2 or 3, the child develops basic

labeling of the self and of others as girls or boys. The next stage is reached around age 5 or 6 when the child recognizes that gender identity does not change over time, which is gender stability. Finally, around age 7, the child understands that her/his gender remains in spite of changes in gender-typed appearances, activities, and traits, which is gender consistency. Kohlberg details the final stage of gender constancy—gender consistency—as the most important level of understanding for motivating children to adopt stereotypical gender roles. However, the following empirical studies reveal the inconsistent findings in Kohlberg in terms of young children's gender stereotyped behaviors prior to the acquisition of gender constancy: Bussey & Bandura (1998), Martin & Ruble (2004).

On the other hand, gender schema theory accounts for possible mechanisms and processes of children's sex-typing. Martin and Ruble (2004) argue that gender schema theory provides a further explanation of the motivational function of children's basic understanding of gender on gender development. Schema based on an information-processing approach to knowledge acquisition (Bem, 1983) is defined as "a cognitive structure, a network of associations that organizes and guides an individual's perception" (p. 355). Gender schema theory insists that human beings classify and organize information from their environment by using gender schema—not only concrete and specific gender-related information and human attributes but also behaviors, attitudes, or abstract ideas. Based on the existing gender schema, children evaluate themselves and others, and match themselves to the prototypes stored within the existing gender schema.

Bem (1983) argues that sex-typing is a result of assimilation of the self-concept to the gender schema.

The cognitive perspective provides the framework for understanding, in respect to gender, children's developmental changes. It is no exaggeration that most studies of young children's gender are derived from cognitive perspectives (Morrow, 2006). Because the cognitive perspective is rooted in Piagetian cognitive theory, the studies tend to illustrate the tunnel vision found in the cognitive theory. Thus, the studies asserted universal stages through which every child passes in shaping gender roles—without consideration of individual, contextual, cultural, or historical variations (Martin & Ruble, 2004). Also, they exclusively put their analytical focus on gender in interpersonal domains, rather than in social and interactional domains. The cognitive perspective is likely to focus on an individual child's psychological process rather than on the historical, cultural, and social contexts in which an individual child constructs her/his gender. Also, regardless of the emphasis on children's own role in the construction of gender, most studies from the cognitive perspective fail to include children's views or lived experiences related to gender (Morrow, 2006). Similar to the social learning theory, the cognitive perspective has made an effort to incorporate the influence of the social environment (Martin, Ruble, & Szkrybalo, 2002; Martin & Ruble, 2004).

Social Constructionist Perspective

The social constructionist perspective acknowledges gender as "[a] construction that is constantly under modification via human interactions that occur in the myriad

social contexts in which we engage" (Yelland & Grisahber, 1998, p. 2). Insisting on gender as "something we do" not as "something we have," the social constructionist perspective dismantles the determined and/or reductive connections of gender to biological, social, or cognitive factors.[22] Compared to the previous frameworks that are appropriate for explaining how and why young children reproduce gender stereotypes, this framework allows several conceptualizations for us to appreciate gender dynamics, variations, and even power relations. In this section, I rely on the social constructionist perspective of gender: Blaise (2005), Davies (2003), MacNaughton (1997, 2000), Thorne (1993), and Yelland & Greishaber, (1998). In doing so I center the discussion mainly on feminism engaged in post-structuralism in the ECE field[23].

Positioning defined by Davies (1994, 2000, 2003) is a useful conceptual tool for understanding how individuals discursively construct gender. Positioning was originally developed in order to understand multiple selfhoods moving beyond static and unitary personhood. In applying Davies' theory to gender, the process of gender construction is involved in: 1) learning of the categories such as girl/boy, student/teacher, 2) participating in the various practices through which the meanings of being a girl or a student are elaborated, 3) positioning of self in some categories and not in others—pretty girls and not untidy girls, and 4) recognizing where one is located and seeing the world from that perspective. When a child enters the world, they learn categories in which they

[22] See West and Zimmerman's (1987) article for more information.

[23] It is often called or claims as its theoretical framework feminist post-structuralism. For more information about feminist post-structuralism, see Weedon (1997), *Feminist Practices and Poststructuralist Theory*.

are included and from which they are excluded. In their everyday lived experiences, they come to assimilate the meanings connected to a category. Positioning themselves in certain categories, children adopt and practice certain ways of thinking, behaving, and talking consistently within the category. Once having taken up particular positions, children inevitably see things from that vantage.

Davies (1994) asserts that positioning is distinguished from role and highlights its fluidity:

> We argue for using the concept of 'positioning' rather than 'role' to show the way in which discourses open up, or make possible, certain subject positions through and in terms of which we interact with the world. Whereas role is somehow external to the person, something that can be taken up or put aside, we argue in that paper that there is nothing self-independent of the positions through which we each fabricate our selves and are fabricated. Position is a much more fluid concept than role and recognizes the constitutive force of discourse to make/fabricate the stories or narratives through which meaningful lives are made. (p. 23)

Along with this, gender is seen as "not fixed but constantly in process" (Davies, 2003b, p. 11). Children position themselves differently (reflexive positions) and at the same time are positioned differently by others (interactive position). In order to investigate gender in its constant process of being (re)made in different time and places, the social constructionist framework requires one to focus attention on the context. Since gender is contextually bounded, the context needs to be scrutinized to understand constructed gender's deeper meanings (Francis & Reay, 2003; Thorne, 1993). Several studies informed by the social constructionist perspective elaborate multiple constructions of gender in kindergarten and primary school (More references; Blaise, 2006; Reay, 2001). Often gender construction is in tension because of complex and contradictory discursive

practices. Therefore, from the social constructionist perspective, gender is not unified or coherent, but inconsistent or contradictory (Davies, 2003; Thorne, 1993).

From the social constructionist perspective, young children are actively involved in the process of gender construction (Blaise, 2006; Davies, 2003; Jones, 1996; MacNaughton, 1997; Thorne, 1993). Contrary to previous frameworks that see children as passive beings, impelled by internal dispositions or reinforcement history, this theoretical perspective regards them as active players in their construction of gender. Davies (2003) states that young children have "the capacity to recognize that constitution and to resist, subvert, and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted." (p. 67). Seeing young children as having agency allows a researcher to appreciate non-stereotypical gender constructions of young children's resistance or deviations (Yelland & Grishaber, 1998). Although young children have agency in constructing gender, "any and all gendered possibilities are not open" to human beings (Butler, 1993, p. 13). Under the social structures, the child is forced to correctly position her/himself as a girl or a boy.

Knaak (2004) suggests that constructionist research inquires "how certain differences are produced . . . as a function of the current gender system" (p. 305), instead of conceiving gender as something static or dichotomous and congruent. Studies grounded on the social constructionist perspective critically discuss the gender binary as the underlying social structure of realities in young children's gender constitution. How the gender binary discursively interferes in various ways with fair competition among numerous possible ways of being a girl or a boy is clearly scrutinized in Blaise (2005),

Davies (2003a, 2003b), Francis, (1998), and Thorne (1993). One single way (or the narrow range) of being a girl or a boy congruent with the gender binary becomes more valuable, desirable, and normal. Therefore, under the gender dichotomy system, young children are regulated to position themselves either as a girl or as a boy "with not much room for the blurring" (Blaise, 2004, p. 97). If they fail to position themselves in "the right category," it is interpreted as some kind of developmental delay that needs to be at best corrected (Martin, 2005).

Studies on Gender in ECE

The number and scope of studies of adolescent girls in and outside of school has been increasing due to girls' studies being established as a disciplinary area. However, studies of young female students in ECE are relatively rare. Therefore, to make clear how this research can be connected to previous studies of gender, I discuss a wide range of such studies dealing with children from birth through age 8. In this section, I address the issues related to methods adopted in the previous studies on gender. Then, I review studies informed by the four theoretical perspectives in order.

The ECE field, Graue and Walsh (1998) point out, has "systematically but narrowly" (p. 4) studied young children. This point also applies to studies on gender of young children. Most current studies rely heavily on the observation of children in quasi-natural settings or on their short answers to interview questions. The dominant research methods in positivist research have played a role in narrowing children's capacity to construct meanings from their lives (Connolly, 1998, 2000). Moreover, the majority of

studies in the field discussing young children's gender consider gender as one of the variables for explaining participants' behaviors (Leaper, 2000; Nepple & Murray, 1997). By discussing only correlations of certain behavioral differences to gender, these studies result in unexpected consequences that perpetuate gender differences.

Studies on Biological Programmed Gender

As previously mentioned, studies conducted from the biological perspective are a rare find in the ECE field. Furthermore, recent attention focused at the micro-level of physiological factors seems to isolate this perspective from the rest of ECE studies. Considering the fact, however, that the ECE field was established on developmental psychology (Burman, 1994; Cannella, 1997), such studies ought to be included in this literature review. Knafo, Iervolino & Plomin (2005) investigated whether genetic or environmental factors are more influential in atypical gender behaviors. 5799 pairs of same sex identical and fraternal twins (ages 3 through 4) were researched with two separate surveys. The researchers asked parents of the twins whether each of their twin children was gender atypical. Then the researcher selected a sample based on one of the twins being considered gender atypical by their parents. The researchers explored whether this atypical gender child could predict whether her or his twin siblings was gender atypical. The correlations between atypical gender behaviors in twin pairs were analyzed according to identical and fraternal twins. The researchers hypothesized that genetic factors are a more significant source in children's atypical gender behavior if the predictabilities of atypical gender behaviors in identical twins are more statistically

significant than those in fraternal twins. If not, according to the researchers, environmental factors are more decisive. The findings show moderate genetic influence in young children's atypical gender role behaviors.

Studies conducted from the biological perspective attribute discrepancies of human behaviors to biological factors. As a consequence, they tend to ignore commonalities and to highlight differences between the two gender groups. Using a single biological factor to explain gender practices, the studies oversimplify the complexity and complications of gender.

Studies on Socially Determined Gender

Studies grounded in the socialization perspective mainly attempt to clarify the role of socialization agents in the shaping of children's gender. Many of these studies investigate such agents as caregivers or teachers, parents, cultural and traditional costumes, and toys (Chick, Heilman-Houser & Hunter, 2002; Leaper, 2000; Nelson, 2000; Witt, 2000). The socialization perspective underlies the second wave feminist approach for gender equality. In a similar discussion, a couple of studies (Chick, Heilamn-Houser & Hunter, 2002; Ebbeck, 1998) suggest practical applications to lessen young children's gender stereotypes.

Leaper (2000) argues for the influence of parents as role models in learning gender-stereotyped behaviors. From the finding of fathers' higher level of assertiveness than mothers, Leaper states that parents transmit and solidify the stereotypical attributes

in social relations: male's orientation to power and dominance and female's orientation to closeness and support.

Chick, Heilman-Houser and Hunter (2002) investigate the practices of gender socialization in a preschool setting through observations. Relying on the socialization perspective, the researchers insist on the significant role of a caregiver in a preschool setting. Furthermore, according to them, if a young child stays longer in an institution than in someone's home, the role of the caregiver becomes more decisive in young children's gender socialization. They analyze interactions between a caregiver and children. The findings demonstrate gender inequitable practices, such as unbalanced attention to one gender over the other, providing stereotyped play materials, frequent verbal recognition of girls' appearance, and discriminatory language that objectifies girls as passive beings. To break this pattern of gender inequities, the researchers provide recommendations for caregivers and preschool teachers.

Ebbeck (1998) refers to the importance of the social and physical environment for dismantling traditional gender stereotypes. She strongly emphasizes the role of the teacher in providing children with equal experiences among many socialization agents in an early childhood classroom. According to Ebbeck, a teacher has to provide a variety of play materials to lead less gender-stereotypical or non-stereotypical activity. A teacher-as-role model to young children also needs to show participation in a range of activities regardless of her/his gender. As a facilitator, a teacher verbally and nonverbally accepts children's less gender-typed activities.

Nelson (2000) investigates how gender stereotypes are reproduced and reiterated through Halloween costumes by analyzing 469 off-the-shelf Halloween costumes. Based on an understanding of gender socialization by way of apparel, Nelson perceives Halloween costumes as a socialization agent. That is, wearing a Halloween costume is not just participation in a fantasy world, but also an imaginative encounter with socially approved femininities or masculinities. The findings demonstrate that many costumes for girls relate to feminine appearance and/or relationships. Female Halloween costumes also reflect the binary concept of passive femininity and active masculinity. Unlike the plethora of male superheroes, female heroines are rare and often eroticized. From the findings, Nelson states that Halloween costumes as social representations of gender reproduce stereotypical notions of what women/girls and men/boys are capable of doing even in a supra-mundane world.

Similarly, Witt (2000) asserts that gender-biased television programs affect their young viewers. According to Witt, young children imitate roles portrayed in television programs and socialize their gender. In particular, Witt points to the distortion of realities, the imbalanced ratio of male to female characters, and the characterization of female characters as being stereotypically feminized, sexualized, and objectified.

Also discussed are toys as play materials and cultural items to encourage children to socialize stereotypically gender-appropriate behaviors. Pomerleau, Bolduc, Malcuit, & Cossette (1990) study the physical environment (toys, clothing, and room decoration) of three age groups (5-, 13-, and 25-months). Gendered differences in the physical environment are commonly observed. Parents select gender appropriate types of toys for

children. Also, children tend to be brought up in separate contexts of pink and blue. The researchers infer from the findings that infants continuously receive reinforcement to develop stereotypes from numerous gendered cultural items. In the same way, Blakemore and Center (2005) catalog characteristics of girls' and boys' toys. They assume that toys categorized as highly gendered are likely to facilitate certain feminine or masculine dimensions (nurturance, attractiveness, appearance vs. competition, violence, and movement).

Boys & Girls: Superheroes in the Doll Corner written by Paley in 1984 is regarded as the first book in the field of early childhood education that places the gender of young children front and center. Paley (1984), a teacher and researcher, provides vivid pictures of how kindergartners develop their gender identities by acting out gendered storylines in a classroom. Although she does not theorize her observations enough, her book recognizes the significant impact of gender on kindergartners. In her classroom, girls and boys are segregated into a doll corner and a block corner by an "invisible curtain" (p. 30). Each group participates in the creation of dominant gender identities by ritualizing exclusive themes: domestic vs. superhero. In explaining the segregation, Paley emphasizes the influence of pop culture or peer approval on children's construction of stereotypical gender identities.

The literature rooted in the socialization perspective has contributed to the current discussion of young children's gender by positioning gender in the relations between young children and other social beings, including cultural items. However, because the socialization perspective emphasizes the unidirectional influence from adults to young

children, these studies seem to fail to explain children's resistance to the modeled gender practices. For this reason, several feminist scholars oriented by post-structuralism label such studies as social determinism.

Studies on Universal Age-Related Developmental Stage

The cognitive perspective on gender has informed numerous studies; most of them attempt to clarify Kohlberg's developmental stages of gender constancy. The studies conceptualize gender as something developing over a certain period of time. Although the cognitive perspective acknowledges children's active roles in gender construction, the studies informed by it are unable to portray the dynamics of children's gender construction. In my view, the gender construction referred to by the cognitive perspective denotes children's active construction of gender schema at an intrapersonal level.

Martin, Ruble, and Szkrybalo (2002), in their substantial review of cognitive perspectives on gender development, point out two significant questions that informed the following studies: whether children's cognitive constructions of gender change their behavior and whether the high level of gender constancy plays any role in motivating children to make gender-related choices and to follow gender stereotypes. There are two competing positions, according to Martin, Ruble, and Szkrybalo (2002) and Warin (2000), related to gender constancy. Some scholars argue, after attainment of gender consistency, the final stage of gender constancy development, that children are more flexible (Martin

& Ruble, 2004); others insist the opposite is true: children develop a more rigid stereotypical attitude.

In order to clarify the motivational role of gender constancy on children's gender development, Warin (2000) assesses children's current level of gender constancy and children's preference for gender-appropriate toys, activities, or playmates. In addition, Warin asked children to put on gender inappropriate clothes for evaluating children's responses to gender inappropriateness. Warin reports that the findings support previous studies, which show that young children establish gender stability around the age of 4 or 5, but do not develop gender consistency. The majority of children, in establishing a certain level of gender constancy, demonstrated strong preferences for gender-appropriate toys, activities, and playmates. When asked to put on gender-inappropriate clothing, children with the highest level of gender constancy strongly refused. Warin supports the argument for the role of "gender constancy" as the motivation for children to follow stereotypes.

Inconsistent with Kohlberg's findings, many studies demonstrate young children's gender stereotypical behaviors prior to the establishment of gender consistency. Warin (2000) indicates there is an early preference for gender-appropriate toys, activities, and playmates before completion of gender consistency. Likewise, Martin, Eisenbud, and Rose (1995) report children's gender-centric reasoning of toy preferences for themselves and others before the age of 7. Moreover, gender-explicit information about a toy is more influential than its attractiveness.

Contrary to Kohlberg's assertion that gender consistency is crucial for motivating children to adhere to stereotypes, many recent studies (Martin, Ruble, & Szkrybalo,2002; Warin, 2000) in particular those informed by gender schema theory, argue that basic gender understanding forces children to make gender stereotypical choices. Martin, Ruble, and Szkrybalo (2002) explain that this inconsistency is related to motivational functions of each level of gender understanding. According to them, a low level of gender understanding makes children recognize the importance of gender in choosing toys or playmates and the higher level of gender understanding motivates children to respond to gender norms, especially when under conditions of conflict.

Fagot, Leinbach and Hagan (1986) studied the relation of children's gender knowledge to sex-typed behaviors. In order to measure children's gender knowledge, the researchers gave toddlers (aged 21-40 months) a series of tasks that required them to organize pictures according to gender. Also, the researchers observed the toddlers in a lab setting while focusing on certain behaviors regarded as sex-typed behaviors. The findings indicated that children who possess gender knowledge frequently display preferences for same-sex playmates and aggressive acts. A low frequency of aggressive acts among girls who have knowledge of gender was interpreted as an outcome of such knowledge. Based on the findings, Fagot, Leinbach and Hagan argue for the importance of an early establishment of gender schema and its role in children's stereotypical attitudes and behaviors. However, in pointing out the early appearance of sex-typed behaviors before the completion of gender identity as posited by Kohlberg, the researchers highlight social

learning theory by noting the effect of the social environment in shaping early sex-typed behaviors.

Raag and Rackliff (1998) studied young children's perception of social expectations in relation to gender-typed or cross-gender-typed toys. For this, the researchers asked children how familiar others (parents, caregivers, teachers, siblings, best friends, etc.) reacted to their gender-typed toy choices or cross-gender-typed toy choices. The findings demonstrate that children think of gender-typed toys as socially expected. In particular, boys more than girls expect unfavorable responses from their fathers when they choose cross-gender-typed toys. The researchers apply this distinction to the more rigid application of gender stereotypical norms to boys.

Durkin and Nugent (1998) assert that young children between 4 and 5 apply their existing gender schemas when they watch television. After showing short video segments, the researchers asked children who would carry out masculine or feminine activities (fixing a car, driving a truck, or going fishing) that appeared in the segments. Children showed strict stereotypical expectations in connection with adult roles or occupations. Furthermore, the children didn't expect adults would perform otherwise in the future.

Bem (1983) accounts for young children's sex-typing from the cognitive perspective, gender schema theory. Maintaining sex-typing as a "learned phenomenon . . . that is neither inevitable nor unmodifiable" (p. 603), Bem presents two strategies for parents to raise gender aschematic children. First, Bem suggests teaching children sex differences only in respect to biology, reproduction, and anatomy. Stereotypes, sex-linked attitudes, behaviors, and other qualities, Bem insists, should be eliminated through

parents' careful censorship. Second, Bem asserts the need to provide "alternative or subversive" schemata to help children resist the dominant gender-schematic culture. Bem raises this point in relation to the connection of social learning theory to liberal feminism.

Scales and Cook-Gumperz (1993) explored the gender constructions of 4-year-olds, revealed in narratives produced by them. The researchers defined a narrative as a "meaningful text" upon which children's understandings of the world or of themselves are projected. Closely examining subject matter, narrative structure, and imaginative ideas, they observed the overwhelming "gender lines" (p. 176) of the narratives young children produced. Girls' narratives included kinship relationships, romantic fairy tale images, marriage, and babies whereas boys' narratives involved power and violence. Drawing on the cognitive perspective, Scales and Cook-Gumperz explain young children's gendered construction of stories: children who established the binary category of gender selected ideas and elements corresponding to their binary categories in order to maintain equilibrium. From Scales and Cook-Gumperz's perspective, gender-as-social construction can be explained as the development of gender schema in children's minds according to children's active function. Scale and Cook-Gunperz refer to gender as social construction; but they are founded on constructivism, not social constructionism.[24]

Boyle, Marshall, and Robeson (2003) examined how gender shapes and is shaped by fourth-graders during their play at recess. From data predominately gathered through

[24] Crotty (2003) distinguished constructivism from constructionism. Constructivism, according to Crotty, exclusively focuses on "the meaning-making activity of the individual mind" (p. 58) compared to constructionism which emphasizes "the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning" (p. 58). In other words, constructivism can be explained as "primarily an individualistic understanding of the constructionist position" (p. 58).

observation, the researchers depict children's gendered daily experiences. Although the researchers refer to "the social constructionist perspective" (p. 1327) on gender as their conceptual framework on gender, the text of Boyle et. al. does not succeed in capturing the situated meaning embedded in children's gendered practices. In addition, it does not illustrate children's shifting, multiple and contradicting constructions of gender. Rather, it merely provides a couple of sketches regarding children's segregated practices according to gender and borderwork that occur in mixed-gender contexts. One thing to consider in the text is the complexity of girls' construction of femininity. The fourth-grade girls in the study display knowledge of a broad range of possible subject positions from which to choose.

The studies reviewed above all fall under the cognitive perspective aegis. Most were designed to verify Kohlberg's developmental stage of gender constancy. Recent studies (Boyle, Marshall, & Robeson, 2003; Scales & Cook-Gumperz, 1993) highlight children's active roles in gender construction. However, none were able to capture gender construction occurring within social relations.

Studies on Socially Constructed Gender

The shifts in the theoretical perspective on gender, Knaak (2004) argues, bring a formulation of different research questions. Knaak explicates this through an examination of a broad range of literature evolved from constructionism. She particularly distinguishes constructionist research from that grounded in biological foundationalism, which mainly assesses whether there is a difference between females and males with

regard to something as a function of sex or gender. Knaak suggests that constructionist research makes inquiries regarding "how certain differences are produced . . . as a function of the current gender system" (p. 305). Instead of conceiving of gender as something static or dichotomous and congruent, constructionist research aims to investigate the process by which gender is produced.

Cutting against the grain of previous ECE literature, the following studies contribute to the growing knowledge of the gender of young children. Despite their ambiguous theoretical framework, I will discuss them with the studies informed by the social constructionist perspective.

Corsaro and Molinary (2005) clarify the visibility of mixed-gender play from an examination of peer interactions observed in Italian preschools. The findings related to mixed-gender play are drawn from a 7-year longitudinal ethnography to investigate young children's transition from primary schools to elementary schools. In explaining the inconsistent findings, Corsaro and Molonari first make note of the different observation methods. According to them, the time-sampling frequently adopted by the previous literature dissects and twists children's interactions from their natural context. The researchers searched for the explanations of the mixed-gender play of Italian children from contextual factors such as teacher-led activities that encouraged young children to interact with each other regardless of gender, disparity in numbers of two groups, school and peer culture in a local context, several students' ambiguous pattern of gender preference, and popular play routines among children.

Gallas (1997) describes 6-, 7-, and 8-year-olds' gender performances in classrooms. Despite the main focus on gender, she highlights the impossibility of separating gender from race and class and asserts that it is important to interpret them holistically. For this, Gallas perceives her students' everyday gender performance through the lens of power: in particular, how students participate in the dynamics of power in a classroom and how they produce, contest, and legitimize the power dynamic. Among emerging varieties of gender performance and the power dynamic constituted by students' performance, Gallas attributes her efforts to trying to describe "bad boys" and "silent girls." Bad boys in Gallas's classroom exercised power over other groups by expressing their masculinities in various ways, especially through the constant creation of masculine narratives in the classroom. Contrary to bad boys attempting to dominate the public "dialogic community," silent girls concealed themselves from public interaction, adopting a passive demeanor. Gallas interprets girls' silence in public as the consequence of their "calculating attitude toward personal display in public" (p. 114). As a good student, a girl recurrently confines herself to silence. Girls' taking "the safe road" in school excludes them from a public context and consequently shortchanges them.

Connolly (2000), in addition to his main interest in racism among children's peer-relations, illustrates the dominance of heterosexuality in the girlhoods of South Asian 5- and 6-year-old girls in an English primary school. Connolly discovered the core forms of "capital" that decide the nature and dynamic of local peer-relations, which appear to be related to heterosexuality. First, knowledge of (heterosexual) relationships and gender differences is cultural capital. This has been expressed through girls' vigorous

involvement in pretend play enacting domestic themes. Having a boyfriend or claiming to have one function is social capital for girls. Attractiveness is a significant issue because it enhances a girls' capacity to get a boyfriend; that is, to gain social capital. Therefore, knowledge and/or use of things for "fostering and maintaining an attractive appearance" are other ways to accumulate cultural capital.

Fleer (1998) explored young children's interpretations of stories within a male-female dualism. A storyline was defined as "the child's understanding of what it means to be a boy or a girl: the social mores associated with their role" (p.23). Fleer points out that gendered storylines regulate young children to follow permitted patterns of behaviors, expectations, and interactions even in a learning situation. In order to render a less discriminating learning context, Fleer suggests that a teacher reposition young children in a different storyline. By doing so, the teacher would be forced to consider a different way of being girls and boys.

Martin (1998) investigated preschoolers' gendered body experiences focusing on the children's physicality. As a result of extensive and semi-structured field observation, she discovered several practices in which the preschoolers' body experiences were decided according to their genders: i.e., body adornments, formal and relaxed behaviors, a controlling voice, instructions received from the teacher, and physical instruction with teachers and among peers. The bodily experiences of young children are in accordance with stereotypical expectations. For instance, teachers are likely engaged with girls' bodies by giving them more specific instructions (to sit up or speak softly) compared to boys. Notwithstanding consistency in these findings with the stereotypical expectations

of the preschoolers, Martin argues that there are numerous cross-gender body experiences in both genders. Focusing on the cross-gender body practices, Martin accounts for bodily differences in the preschoolers as socially constructed and gendered through social institutions (family, school, peers, and media) rather than determined naturally.

McMurray (1998) scrutinized gender behaviors of young children integrated in other social processes, "becoming a student and a peer" (p. 288). Indeed, many gender studies miss the interconnectedness of gender and other social processes. The point she raises will have repercussions on future gender studies in a classroom. A classroom is not a spatial boundary in which young children exist. As a disciplinary space which establishes limits and possibilities in gender construction, a classroom should be considered with an emphasis on which gender construction is valorized in school and how gender becomes integrated with one's identity as a student.

I move the focus now to feminist studies influenced by post-structuralism. Messner (2000) observed young children's gender constructions in a youth soccer league. Drawing on the concept of "borderwork" (Thorne, 1993), Messner carefully describes how young children construct gender through participation in a cultural and social practice. In one incident, a girl team selected Barbie as their symbol and marched with a big Barbie doll in an opening ceremony. In response to the girls' public gender performance, Sea Monster—a boys team—asserted their masculinity by disrupting the girls' march, yelling and chanting anti-Barbie songs. Messner explored the structural and cultural contexts of the youth soccer league in which the particular gender construction

happened. Also, Messner calls for the need to look at a larger context as it plays a critical role in constraining and configuring everyday gender construction.

Thorne (1993)'s ethnography elaborately depicts children's playground practices from the perspective of gender as social construction in her groundbreaking book, *Gender Play*. Through intimate interactions with and extended observation of kids, Thorne illustrates the variety of ways in which gender is negotiated and enacted in public schools. Thorne proposes that gender is created and recreated through social processes in which kids get involved. Her emphasis on the fluidity and multiplicity of gender according to social contexts allows her to capture the existence of multiple forms of femininity and masculinity. In particular, Thorne subverts the mythical belief of gendered segregation by scrutinizing children's performance of the choreography of separation and being together. Thus, she puts interaction between girls and boys at the center of her analysis and offers a new direction in which to investigate children's gender. She in particular conceptualizes certain interaction between girls and boys as "borderwork" (p. 64). There are six types of borderwork defined by Thorne (1993): contest, cross-gender ritual of chasing, and pollution, and invasions.

Davies (2003) examined young children's understanding and construction of gender as expressed in their talk and interactions. For this, Davies read feminist stories with young children and listened to their responses to and interpretations of the stories. Davies used the active strategy of discovering children's perspectives on gender through interviews. Her findings contradict similar studies based on a socialization model. The young children resisted ideas by criticizing deviant characters in the stories, relying on

the binary concept of gender. Davies refers to young children's construction of gender within the binary and exclusive category as "category maintenance work" (p.31). Using a similar process to their 2003 study, Davies and Kasama (2004) explored Japanese preschool children's gender. Davies and Kasama read feminist stories to children and listened to their responses. Japanese children drew meaning from the stories based on dichotomized gender categories. They did, however, evaluate the characters and project Japanese moral imperatives—harmony, social rules, and obedience to authority—onto the characters.

MacNaughton (1994) investigated girls' preference for the dramatic center and their strategies to gather more dominance over boys. MacNaughton provides a provocative account of girls' unstoppable desire to be at the dramatic center. Influenced by feminism and post-structuralism, MacNaughton analyzes the girls' words and behaviors in order to investigate the discourse, power, and subjectivity. MacNaughton clarifies that playing the mother role is desirable for girls because of its superior domestic position. For that reason, the mom role at a dramatic center is highly ranked because it allows girls to exercise power not only inside the play narrative as mom, but also outside it as a director.

MacNaughton (1996) insists on the need for a new theoretical perspective on gender. She critically examines the shared concerns of parents and educators about the influences of so-called "gender-typed" play materials like *Barbie* or *Power Rangers*. In doing so, MacNaughton (1996) points out the limitations of the traditional socialization perspective underlying the shared concerns as well as the previous studies of "gender-

typed" play materials. According to MacNaughton, the failure of the socialization perspective to explain individual gender differences among children in relatively homogeneous cultures compels an alternative perspective. MacNaughton adopts feminist post-structuralism as her alternative. Contrary to the socialization perspective that conceptualizes children as reproducers of the existing culture; feminist post-structuralism appreciates children as beings who are agents in their gender construction. MacNaughton explains that a child's agency causes the observable differences among children. That is, children actively construct their gender identification and occasionally produce counter-gender understanding from the dominant culture. From this point of view, children would reconstruct their gender understanding through consistent struggles between their own concepts and those imposed on them. It is therefore hard to believe that children replicate stereotypical gender concepts by playing with gender-typed materials. This understanding weakens the rationale for prohibiting engagement with *Barbie* or *Power Rangers*. Hughes and MacNaughton (2000), going beyond suggesting a new framework, discuss the educational possibilities of children's play with *Barbie* as a means to understand, as well as to challenge, children's prevailing understandings of masculinity and femininity.

MacNaughton, in *Rethinking Gender in Early Childhood Education* (2000), suggests several insightful directions for gender equity education for young children. From an action research project with Australian early childhood teachers, she uncovers nine common myths pervasive in the gender equity discussion: the sex-role socialization perspective, child-centeredness, the developmental gaze, the dominant image of children as gender-innocent, etc. In spite of working with individual teachers, MacNaughton

vigorously searched for how disciplinary knowledge of ECE limits and restricts an individual teacher from taking actions to reform her/his classroom practices. From the feminist poststructuralist perspective, MacNaughton presents alternative knowledge for understanding the complexity of young children's gender and for overcoming the individual-oriented gender discussion. In connection to the findings from this research project, MacNaughton will be discussed in further detail later.

Danby (1998) analyzed an episode in which two preschool girls employed the ritualized local masculine discourse of boys at the art table. The local ritualized masculine discourse, according to Danby, was utilized by boys at the block center to dominate other boys. Although the girls utilized a cross-gender discourse in order to gain status, the girls in Danby's observation mitigated the level of conflict by incorporating pretend themes. Danby's work demonstrates preschoolers' capacity for constructing their gendered social order via a detailed interpretation of preschoolers' talk in the play situation. The findings also show the girls' capacity to adapt their gender construction to the contextual need.

Jones (1996) analyzed two pretend play narratives of 4-year-old girls in an Australian nursery placement class in order to explore discourses forming girls' notions of femininity. Jones analyzed embedded meanings and understanding of women's lives, which were enacted in girls' pretend play that was "a means of understanding emerging femininity" (p. 311). The two narratives were related to stereotypical feminine positions: wife and mother. However, the girls did not reproduce stereotypical femininity. Although the girls enacted a wedding ceremony, they did not adopt the role of a wife which is

inextricably liked to marriage in the play narrative. Jones states that through refusing to name a male character and to identify themselves as wives, the girls revealed their alternative notions of femininity. The mother was also described as being a more independent, autonomous, and dominant person who was able to confront authorities, played by boys. Jones argues that the girls did not reconstitute the traditionally approved female role by inserting non-traditional features in the roles in spite of their taking stereotypical feminine roles.

Francis (1998) closely investigated gender construction in primary school students (age 7 to 11), focusing on relationships between gender and power. She interviewed students regarding the role of gender in their lives at school and gender issues related to adult work. She observed students' as they role played adults in workplace scenarios selected by the researcher. From these methods, Francis uncovered that students constructed gender not only as "relational and different to one another," but also as "oppositional, leading to the formation of symbolic gender cultures" (p. 31) through category maintenance work. The students in Francis' study revealed their oppositional construction of identity as sensible and selfless girls vs. silly and selfish boys. Her analysis illustrates how the constructed gender identity discursively operates in students' daily practices. For instance, girls in mixed-sex groups appeared to be in powerless states by enacting subordinate roles in the scenarios. Francis interprets the girls' concession of more desirable roles to boys as the consequence of girls' discursive construction of being sensible and selfless. However, Francis acknowledges that it is maintained by "the

exaggeration of feminine and masculine behavior through their gender category maintenance work" (p. 33).

Skelton (2000) discusses how a certain group of boys (ages 6 or 7) constituted masculinities in a primary school context. Based on the literature of masculinity in the school, Skelton asserts the significance of this particular age group because they were just starting their educational experience. In analyzing the local masculinities of a classroom, Skelton considers the students' connections to several levels of masculinities seen in larger contexts. The constructed masculinity in the classroom demonstrated the features of "lad," which is the dominant masculinity for working-class adolescent boys. The boys in Skelton's study individually or collectively resisted school authority and devalued what they were supposed to do as students. Also, they established violent, aggressive, and competitive peer relationships among themselves in order to take the position of the boss. Among the possible ways of being (lad, pupil, and child), the boys followed the way of being lads, which was desirable in their local community.

Blaise (2005) addresses, from the perspectives of feminist post-structuralism and queer theory, the heterosexual matrix in which young children in a kindergarten classroom discursively constitute themselves as gendered beings. Drawing from Butler, Blaise writes that the heterosexual matrix "designate[s] that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized" (Butler as cited in Blaise, 2005). Through extended participant observation and interviews with children, Blaise uncovered five gender discourses within the heterosexual matrix: wearing femininity, body movements, makeup, beauty, and fashion talk. In addition to the discussion of

regulating gender discourses within the heterosexual matrix, Blaise presents analyses of three individual cases showing how an individual kindergartner does gender as an active agent within the heterosexual matrix with an emphasis on power.

Änggård (2005) investigated young children's ways of making gender by analyzing stories written by young Swedish children (ages 4 to 6). Similar to previous studies on young children's narratives, children produced gendered genres: relational genre and hero genre. Particularly, heterosexual romance, the love between the princess and the prince, is the central themes of girls' stories. Änggård suggests that girls' propensity for romance is an expression of their unconscious desire to safely position themselves within compulsory heterosexuality; this suggestion relies on Walkerdine (1997). By selecting certain thematic contents, individual girls each came to position themselves as girls, which is exclusively differentiated from other categories. However, Änggård points out an alternative space of doing gender appeared in the girls' stories: that is, girls created new female characters with more agency and power. Deviations from the princesses portrayed in the girls' stories in a traditional fairy tale would signify a new subject position for girls that "transcends and dissolves the division" (p.) of gender categories.

Robinson and Díaz (2006) state that ECE has not fully incorporated social justice and equity in relation to sexuality. Early childhood settings predominantly regard sexuality as irrelevant to young children. The deeply rooted exclusion of homosexual families from an early childhood setting is explained in several different ways. First, Robison and Díaz, heavily engaged in feminist post-structuralism, critically examine the

dominant discourses of childhood and sexuality; how the developmentalist constituted young children as "asexual, innocent, and 'too' young to be capable of understanding or dealing with such 'adult' concepts as sexuality" (p. 154). Also, they point out the inconsistent practice of an early childhood setting to normalize heterosexuality. Specifically, children's practices associated with heterosexuality in early childhood settings are often regarded as "'children being children' and a natural part of growing up" (p. 155) by authority figures. In addition, the prevalence of heteronormativity in early childhood settings comes to marginalize children from same-sex parent families. From these issues, Robinson and Díaz assert the need to include sexuality equity issues as a critical component of social justice education for all.

Many social constructionist studies demonstrate the discursive process of gender construction in young children's lived experiences—not the process of children reproducing gender stereotypes or of their current developmental stage. The studies highlight how the current system of gender dichotomy produces and is produced by young children's dichotomized construction. Moreover, the studies capture the multiplicity and fluidity of gender by paying attention to a context in which young children construct and are constructed by gender.

Girls' Studies

Feminist scholars have concentrated girls both inside and outside of the context of school and established a relatively rich fund of knowledge about adolescent girls' lives: schooling (AAUW, 1999; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Weiner, 1985,), girls' identity

(Gilligan,1993 ; Inness, 1998; Pipher, 1994), sexuality (Lees, 1993), and other central issues in girls' lives, such as body image, friendships, etc.,(Lees, 1993; Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2000; Schooler et al., 2004), even their struggles with stereotypical expectations. Nonetheless, Inness (1998, 2000) points out the narrow vision apparent in the existing body of literature on girls due to their almost exclusive focus on only white middle class girls in so-called advanced industrial societies. In this section, I briefly review literature of the girls' studies field in order to situate this study in the current discussion of girls. At first, I address AAUW's report that raises critical consciousness regarding girls' gendered experiences in school. Studies highlighting girls' oppressive practices follow. Then I move to studies that conceptualize girls as active agents in their gender construction. This section closes with a review of feminist studies influenced by post-structuralism.

Girls as Victims in Literature

The American Association of University Women (AAUW, 1999) investigated what girls (ages 9-15) experience in school. The AAUW aimed to find improvement in girls' experiences after the massive efforts begun in 1992 to make school more equitable for girls. The findings of the AAUW are actually discouraging because girls are still found to be disadvantaged in school, due to various types of latent and manifest sexisms embedded in school and school authorities. However, taking "gender equity" as its goal to improve the current practices of girls and to suggest implications for practice, the AAUW calls for the need to adopt more active strategies which will meet the needs of

equity in the outcomes of students, rather than just a mechanical distribution of opportunities.

Gilligan (1993) points out the inappropriateness of the dominant psychological explanations of a female's development, in particular her moral development and identity. According to Gilligan, major theorists such as Freud, Erikson, and Kohlberg were unable to consider the particularities of female lives and consequently could not explain the particularity of female development. Gilligan insists that a female develops her identity through attachment and intimacy with others, whereas a male's identity develops through separation and independence from others. An ethic of caring evolves within a female who perceives relationships as a network, not as a hierarchy. Moreover, Gilligan explicates that a young female around the age of eleven suppresses her voice and locates other's voices before her own by developing responsive thinking.

Pipher (1994), a psychiatrist, discusses the central difficulties driving adolescent girls into self-loss and self-collapse. Pipher argues that young females' tragedies are based in developmental features of adolescence, American culture, and girls' estrangement from their parents. She particularly stresses cultural impacts in girls' identity collapse. According to her, a girl is constantly force fed a certain message of what an ideal female is and is compelled to emulate that image. In order to make a safe place for girls, Pipher asserts that a precise understanding of girls' lives and an active involvement in their sufferings is required.

Through journalistic interviews and observation, Orenstein (1994) portrays adolescent girls in a light similar to that of Pipher's work. She reports how girls are

shortchanged by an educational system that implicitly and explicitly sets girls up to fail. After spending a year as a participant observer in two schools, Orenstein wrote a firsthand account about the realities today's girls face.

Girls as Active Agents in Literature

In spite of the contributions of early studies on girls, the studies tend to cast the girls as victims by highlighting their vulnerability to social pressures (Inness, 1998). Also, they approach girls as a single universalized group without awareness of variations according to race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, etc. Critical recognition of the limited perspectives on girls has led the following studies to pay more attention to girls' role as active agents in building girls' culture and self-identities (Inness, 1998). Also, recent studies, tuning in to the notion of "Girl Power," emphasize girls' potential to resist and to build their own subcultures (Haag, 2000; Lees, 1993). Multiplicities of girlhood in different cultures have recently been considered (Lemish, 1998).

McRobbie (2000) is regarded as the first author to limit the sociological discussion of adolescent girls by placing them at the center of her academic attention.[25] Drawing on the definition of culture as a "map of meaning which summarizes and encapsulates their social and material life experience" (p. 45), she explored the culture of working-class adolescent girls in the U.K. McRobbie aims to appreciate girls' lived experiences modulated by the social, cultural, and material constraints of their social life and their negotiation of the structural constraints. Girls' lived experiences in three

[25] The first edition was published in 1991.

institutions that circulate ideologies of their subordination (school, family, and youth club) were examined. McRobbie argues that working-class girls do not mechanically accept the ideologies imposed by the institutions, through "gentle undermining, subtle redefinition and occasionally of outsight confrontation" (p. 53). Also, they establish a cohesive female culture based on friendship as a subversive space regardless of their strong interests in heterosexual relationships.

As opposed to the AAUW's report, which observed girls in school at a social level, Haag (2000) investigated the lives of teenage girls at a personal level. To do this, Haag analyzed girls' responses to survey questions and group interviews. From descriptions of their lives, Haag found complexities and even contradictions. Her findings also showed that cultural and social variations of girls related to race, ethnicity, language, and class diversity constructed their girlhoods. In Haag's book, the girls stated their confusion at the flood of expectations of them. One complexity is represented in the ideal of a slim and stylized body. Although the girls recognized the unreality of culturally compulsory girlhoods, they also spoke of the social pressure to attain the model image in order to fit into a desirable peer group. Whether rebelling against the unrealistic expectation of a slim and stylized body or adhering to the icon to fit into peer cliques, the girls continuously negotiated between what they are supposed to be as girls and what they want to be.

In order to understand adolescents' gender construction through language, Lees (1993) interviewed 100 girls and 30 boys in England aged 15 or 16 years old. Lees is especially interested in the ways in which females resist or conform to gender stereotypes

and sexism in school. Among emergent topics in the girls' talk—school, friendship with girls and boys, family, sexuality, and future expectations—Lees maintains that sexuality is an issue that permeates girls' everyday lives. Her findings delineate multiple contradictions related to sexuality that regulate adolescent girls in private and public spaces. Lees describes the situation of girls as having to walk in a narrow line, which represents their efforts to regulate themselves, to not be sexually "too loose" or "too tight." Lees endeavors to move beyond the victimization of girls concentrating on how girls resist and subvert the multiple forms of oppression imposed on them by boys, school, and society.

In a similar vein, Eder, Evans, and Parker (1995) did a longitudinal ethnographic study of middle schools set in the US Midwest. By examining institutional and language practices, the researchers found the local constructions of gender in a public school setting: aggressive masculinity and attractive femininity. The local construction of gender was perpetuated by school curriculum and authorities rather than problematized. Within the school context, girls struggled with the oppressive image of beauty, on the basis of which they could be excluded from a highly valued social status, like that of cheerleader. Not only investing in themselves to achieve a socially appreciated appearance, girls also internalized appearance as the primary way to judge females; they objectified themselves for the heterosexual male gaze. In order to overcome the current gender inequality, Eder, Evans and Parker suggest a reform of school culture so that a more collaborative, rather than competitive, culture is emphasized.

The four studies above spotlight girls' agency in gender construction in a school setting (Eder, Evans, and Parker, 1995; Haag, 2000; Lees, 1993; McRobbie, 2000). Although the studies all indicate the tendency of schools to institutionalize traditional/stereotypical femininity, they do not suggest that schools victimize girls. They instead make efforts to describe how girls negotiate and resist institutionalized femininity. The studies discussed below are in a similar vein in spite of their attention to girls' lives outside school. Budgen (1998) investigated current tensions surrounding girls' identity construction through interviews with twelve adolescent girls (age 16-18) in Britain. The findings demonstrate that girls have made assertive, confident, and challenging identity constructions. In interacting with the traditional notion of femininity or girlhood, girls were active agents in evaluating and problematizing these notions instead of conforming to them. The girls' resistances to social constraints were found in self-determination and individualization. Regardless of the broad possibilities of ways of being, Budgen mentions the tension between the girls being active, knowing agents and the objective conditions surrounding them. Budgen also points out the lack of access to resources for girls' different ways of being.

Through a close examination of girls' interpretations of the Spice Girls, Lemish (1998) illustrates middle-class Jewish Israeli girls' construction of femininities. Lemish interviewed girls with a focus on how they engage with a particular media subject: the Spice Girls. The girls, Lemish finds, constructed independent femininities out of the Spice Girls text, which obviously embodies "Girl power." Despite the role of the Spice Girls as an alternative text of femininities for preadolescent girls, Lemish argues that this

alternative text can be interpreted as "a disguised version of the conventional truth claim" of the centrality of the "look" in female identity (p. 164). By considering the looks of the Spice Girls, participants of the study demonstrated the pervasive regulating power of the beauty myth in the construction of femininities.

Similarly, Russell and Tyler (2002) critically analyzed a cultural and commercial text, Girl Heaven, which is a chain of retail outlets that sells various commodities (clothes, hair styling products, cosmetics and accessories) for 3- to 13-year-old girls in the UK. In addition, Girl Heaven also provides a service area in which girls can dress up. Through reading the cultural and commercial text and interviewing 10- and 11-year-old girls, the researcher attempted to locate the femininity that is inscribed in contemporary consumer culture. Girl Heaven discursively re-inscribes the feminine aesthetic through its marketing strategies and products, which shows "an abundance of pink, glitter and heart shapes." The girls, as devotees of Girls Heaven, constructed gender through presentation and performance of a female body in "patriarchally determined and often instrumentally imposed aesthetic code" (p. 628). The girls, however, were not just passive consumers who reproduced an imposed femininity. The girls in the study actively interpreted Girl Heaven's image of femininity in relation to it being the appropriate degree of "girlie."

Girls' bodies have been one topic frequently studied in terms of how body image influences girls' self-esteem and identity. The following two studies on girls' bodily practices, however, lay their analytic foci on different aspects: how girls' bodily practices in school construct gender identity. Kim, K. A. (2002) uncovered adolescent girls' gender identity construction on/through the body. From narratives of university female students

reminiscing about their experiences in middle-and high-school, Kim, K. A. notes that the physical changes occurring as they reached puberty—menstruation and breast development—were perceived negatively. Through repeated disciplinary emphasis on proper concealment of girls' bodies from others' gaze, according to the author, the girls tended to internalize a negative perspective on girls' bodies. The participants also spoke of disciplinary control and regulation of their bodies through the wearing of school uniforms. Due to school uniforms, usually a skirt and blouse, their bodies were limited in the ways they could move, sit, pose, and walk in school. Kim, K. A. argues that their style of school uniform sexualized the girls' bodies. Paradoxically, the school consistently disciplined, inspected, and punished the girls' bodies for not wearing covering garments. Kim, K. A. remarks that the school institutionalized girls as sexually passive objects of others' desire, imposing rules about such articles as bras, slips, and girdles.

Oliver (1999), recognizing the importance of the body in identity construction, explored four adolescent girls' construction of meaning regarding their bodies. To do this, she draws heavily on girls' voices. Through various types of narratives, the girls revealed their struggles to fit themselves or their bodies into the normalized image of a perfect woman. The girls constructed multiple meanings of bodies by using the categories of "Fashion In" and "Fashion Out." According to the four girls, "Fashion In" was achieved with the right clothes, shoes, body shape, and hair. Oliver critically points out their internalization of sexism, racism, and classism, all of which are deeply entrenched in the image of a perfect woman.

With the recognition of the body as "the significant locus of subjectivity" (p. 176), Pomerantz (2006) looked at the way in which Canadian high school girls embodied subjectivity through adopting styles. Pomerantz begins with a discussion of conceptualizing girls' style as "a shifting and malleable text that enables girls to find each other, to form (dis)identifications, and to distinguish themselves from others" (p. 175). Wearing a certain style of clothes is not simply adding an outer layer but assuming a new subject position. For instance, the girls marked themselves as popular by adopting Britney or JLO styles. They did "emphasize femininity" (Connell, 1995). Also, through a discursive negotiation, the girls kept (dis)identifying themselves. Pomerantz also points out the constraints caused by economic, cultural, and religious realities.

Feminist-Post Structuralist Studies on Girls

Feminist scholars engaged in post-structuralist studies, which pay attention to language, discourse, and power, reveal what were in the previous literature unfamiliar, unseen, and unheard aspects of girls' lived experiences. In addition, conceptualizing gender as myriad and fluid, they actively discuss complexities and contradictions that appear in girls' discursive construction of gender. Here I give due attention to these studies oriented by post-structuralism; the age groups of girls studied vary significantly.

Adams and Bettis (2003) expound on how normative femininity and the ideal of girlhoods are negotiated and reproduced in a uniquely American discursive cultural practice: cheerleading. The researchers initially looked at how the practice of cheerleading has been constituted in the social, cultural, and historical contexts. Then,

Adams and Betties moved to middle-school girls who dedicated themselves to preparing for cheerleading. Through interviews and observations, they found cheerleading to be a contradictory space where girls constructed and practiced their femininities. According to Adams and Bettis, cheerleading allowed the girls to express their heterosexual femininities by enacting supportive roles and decorating their bodies for others' gazes. At the same time, the girls resisted the stereotypical female body—which is supposed to be docile, soft, and weak—by having bodies that exude confidence and athleticism.

Reay (2001) investigated gendered power relations and various femininities—such as "Spice Girls," "nice girls," "girlies," and "tomboys"—through a one-year participant observation in a primary school. Reay discovered four distinctive femininities exhibited by girls in his study. These identifiable femininities varied to the extent to which they accepted or resisted conventional femininity. Reay indicates, however, that no matter which femininity the girls chose, they all positioned themselves within the matrix of heterosexuality that is conceptualized by Butler (1990). Furthermore, Reay presents the complexity of subjectivity by analyzing the four local femininities in relation to social class and ethnicity.

Through participant observation of primary schools, Renold (2001) investigated how academic success is defined and negotiated in relation to the dominant gender discourses. Her findings demonstrate that, among students, academic success is surprisingly regarded as an opposite gender characteristic, and is devalued by same gender peers. For instance, high achieving girls faced double jeopardy at school. They risked being called a "square," which is regarded as unfeminine. Or, they chose to endure

the denigration of their academic ability by boys to avoid being labeled as square. The findings in Renold's study vividly demonstrate the oppressive regulation of girls' experiences in school by dominant gender discourses. Although the school valued and rewarded a student's academic successes, girls renegotiated the meaning of academic success and regulated their experiences to normalize their social status.

Francis (1999) investigated children's discussions of the practices of gender discrimination through semi-structured interviews with 145 children ages 7-11. Her study reports that the majority of girls and boys experience sexism in school. Children's experiences of sexism were most often related to verbal abuse, teasing, physical abuse, and exclusion from certain activities. Francis points to the fact that the majority of sexist incidents were perpetrated by boys. Francis moves beyond problematizing the sexism in school by drawing on Davies (1989)'s gender category maintenance. Children's practice of sexism, according to Francis, polices the boundary of gender as a form of power and control.

The current body of literature on sexuality in school predominantly discusses students in secondary schools (Hey, 1997; Lees, 1993) with the recognition of schools as "key social sites in the production and reproduction of . . . heterosexuality and . . . sexual culture" (Renold, 2003, p. 179). Many studies (Francis, 1999; Jordon, 1995; Skelton, 2000; Thorne, 1993) on primary/elementary school students rarely put sexuality at the center of their discussion in spite of their references to production of sexual identities. Renold (2000, 2003, 2006) recently initiate the discussion of this topic of (hetero) sexuality in relation to younger children in primary schools. Distant from the perspective

of a "sexually innocent" child and an "asexual" environment of school, Renold argue for "the organizational heteronormativity of the primary school" (Renold, 2003, p. 189).

Renold (2000) considers (hetero) sexuality as a part of children's daily experience in primary school and examines its function in children's identity construction. Here I single out the analysis of girls from her 2000 text to review in detail. The following are what Renold explains as central practices in which heterosexuality is experienced, negotiated, and maintained: girls' investment in producing heterosexual somatic ideals and in being a girlfriend. The girls' body project goes beyond simply embodying cultural codes of the superficial feminine aesthetic to being a desirable body for the heterosexualized gaze. To do this, Renold claims, girls carefully regulate and control their bodies "as objects and subjects of heterosexual desire" (p. 311). There are two tensions that occur in girls' bodily practices to be desirable and attractive. First, their practices contradict the dominant subject position as an "innocent" or "protected" girl and subsequently generate the current moral panic of girls' sexualized fashion. That is, by locating themselves in an alternative subject position, girls violate the binary of adult/child. The second tension is related to the double standard imposed over girls' sexuality as similarly reported in studies on adolescent girls (Hey, 1997; Lees, 1993; Russule & Tyler, 2002). Girls articulate and rearticulate the safe boundary of "tarty but not too tarty" (p. 313) through internal and external surveillance. The second aspect of girls' heterosexualized practices related to being a girlfriend is discussed in Renold's 2006 article.

Renold (2003) investigated primary school girls' romantic culture and relationships to investigate their normative gender identity construction by drawing upon Butler. Renold discovered four "dominant, yet competing and regulatory" (p. 495) discourses from her ethnographic study. As mentioned in similar studies (Hey, 1997; Lees, 1993), having a boyfriend is an "overt compulsory signifier for the public affirmation of . . . heterosexuality" (Renold, 2003, p. 181). Taking the subject position as girlfriends, the girls achieve normative femininity. At the same time, Renold argues that the girlfriend subject position provides girls with the possibility to subvert the conventional way of being a girl, which is predominantly subordinate. Through exercising female power over boyfriends, girls can secure a powerful position, especially in school settings, without "rendering themselves *unfeminine*" (2006, p. 498). Girls' subversion of the heterosexual matrix as tomboys steps outside normative gender/sexuality boundaries.

In her ethnographic study conducted in two England schools serving ages 11-18, Hey (1997) described girls' friendships as "sites of power and powerlessness" (p. 19). Hey attempts to capture "the social and affective dimensions of girls' experience" (p. 23) in performing the role of friend. She reports that the boundary of girls' friendships discursively shifted as a result of their negotiation of three subject positions related to "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 1995):being nice, being desirable, and being good. The subject positions were negotiated mainly by the normality of becoming a girl legitimized within their own social, cultural, ethnic, and material conditions. That is, according to Hey, belonging to a certain friendship entails appropriately performing

certain subject positions. Girls' desire to be normal plays a decisive role in forcing them to inscribe certain legitimized subject positions.

Raby (2006) investigated Canadian adolescent girls' perceptions and experiences of school from interviews. In order to analyze girls' resistance to school, Raby drew on two theoretical perspectives—modernist and post-modernist. According to Raby, adolescent girls' resistance was hard to pin down because it was manifested in "local, micro-struggles" and operated in an "oppositional but sporadic, diffuse, and localized manner" (p. 148). Furthermore, the girls' resistance was generally located in private spaces in order to avoid the risk of being criticized. Moreover, the girls took contradictory positions toward school. Some girls in Raby's study demonstrated overt resistance to school, but at the same time, invested themselves in education. As a result, according Raby, the girls' resistance may be unnoticed or misinterpreted as their accommodation from the modernist perspective.

This chapter has reviewed discussions of young children's gender in the Korean and Western ECE fields. By exploring the four dominant frameworks, I have described ways that the body of knowledge about the gender of young children has been expanded and deepened. I have especially emphasized the contribution of the social constructionist perspective. In addition, I have briefly looked at studies on preadolescent and adolescent girls. Most studies informed by the social constructionist perspective are about Western girls and done by Western scholars. Considering the invisibility of girls in other cultures in the mainstream ECE, this case study should contribute to expanding and diversifying the body of knowledge by adding Korean early childhood girls to it.

CHAPTER THREE

The Methodology of the Study

This chapter reports the methodology of this study of Korean girls' construction and negotiation of girlhoods in a kindergarten class. Before presenting the details of the methodology, I begin by discussing the research purpose of the research and the questions driving the study. Then, I briefly state the design of study as a case study informed by interpretivism and feminism. Following this, I explain my positionalities in pursuing this research. Next, I address the ethical consideration in doing this study. The research setting and participants are detailed to give readers a sense of presence in the research setting. I then go on to illuminate the procedures of data collection and data analysis. Finally, I explain the way trustworthiness was established.

Research Questions

I conducted a case study (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2000) to describe Korean girls' construction and negotiation of girlhoods in a kindergarten class, drawing on interpretivism and feminism (Blaise, 2005; Davies, 2003; MacNaughton, 2000; Walkerdine, 1990). The research questions driving this study were:

1. What are the constructions of girlhood that emerge in a Korean kindergarten classroom?
2. How do the girls in the classroom negotiate the constructions of girlhood?

The Design of the Study

This study was designed as a case study (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2000) to investigate the questions above while employing interpretivism and feminism (Harding, 1987; Lather, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Reinharz, 1992; D. Wolf, 1996). Feminism as a theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998) has shaped this study by providing the methods (Cook & Fonow, 1990; DeVault, 1996; Harding, 1987; Lather, 1991; Wolf, 1996) and the conceptual framework for girls' lived experiences (Blaise, 2005; Davies, 2003; MacNaughton, 2000; Walkerdine, 1990). In order to highlight the constructions of girlhood, I utilized several methods to collect qualitative data: participant observation, audio-recordings of participants' talk, formal and informal interviews with participants, a collection of student participants' drawings and writings, and a research journal. Reflexivity and reciprocity, two representative features of feminist research (Cook & Fonow, 1990; DeVault, 1996; Harding, 1987; Lather, 1991; Wolf, 1996) were seriously considered to complete the methodology. For data analysis, I draw on open coding, as presented by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

Case Study

This study was designed as a case study informed by multiple theoretical perspectives: interpretivism and feminism. The fundamental reason for employing a case study to answer the research questions was the possibility of producing an in-depth description of case studies. According to Yin (1989), case studies generate in-depth descriptions by focusing on the particularities of a case. Also, case studies were

considered proper to highlight processes rather than outcomes, contexts rather than variables, and discovery rather than confirmation of existing theories.

Stake (2000) states that a case study is a choice of what is studied rather than a choice of method. Similarly, Merriam (1998) defines a case study as an inquiry to investigate "a thing, a single entity, and a unit around which there are boundaries" (p. 27). In this study, the case is one Korean kindergarten class for 5-year-olds. However, I did not select a case for this study based on my intrinsic interest in the kindergarten class itself. According to Merriam (1998) and Stake (2000), case studies can be identified depending on a researcher's interest in a case: an intrinsic case study vs. an instrumental case study. In order to explore and illustrate Korean girls' construction and negotiation of girlhood in a kindergarten class, one kindergarten class was selected as a case. Although the case was selected by the secondary interest, it was "looked at in depth, its context scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed" (Stake, 2000, p. 437).

Theoretical Perspectives

This case study has been informed by multiple theoretical perspectives: interpretivism and feminism. Theoretical perspectives, as "the way of looking at the world and making sense of it" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8), provided the philosophical foundation of the choices made about research methods. Because the two theoretical perspectives have been evolved from it (Crotty, 1998), I briefly mention constructionism.

Constructionism

Constructionism is the epistemology of interpretivism and feminism. It has been confused with constructivism; however, in this writing, I follow Crotty's (1998) terminology. (1998). Constructionism, according to Crotty, is defined as the following:

> . . . the view that *all knowledge and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context*. (p. 42)

From the constructionist epistemological stance, meanings are constructed by human beings in a social, cultural, and historical context as they try to make sense of the world (Burr, 2002; Crotty, 1998). Contrary to the positivist epistemological stance, where meanings are regarded as fixed and universal, constructionism declares that meanings are shifting, multiple, and bound to a social, cultural and historical context. Subsequently, the constructed and shared meanings among human beings are continuously negotiated, altered, validated or abandoned through on-going human interactions. In respect to value, constructionism opposes value-free meanings, arguing that meaning must reflect the values or value-system in which it is nested; hence the term "value-laden."

Interpretivism.

The nature of meanings asserted by constructionism, therefore, requires a different way of knowing. Lincoln and Guba (1985) in *Naturalist Inquiry* present in detail how the epistemological stance of constructionism is actualized in an empirical study.[26]

[26] More specific information will be found in their chapter, *Doing What Comes Naturally*, in the same book.

The methodology of this study attempts to reflect Lincoln and Guba. First of all, I observed young children in a classroom context in which their everyday experiences occur: according to Lincoln and Guba's term, in a "natural setting" (p. 187). More than just being in a classroom, I attempted to be "interlocked in an interactive process" (Mertens, 1998, p. 13) in order to understand meanings within interactions among members in the classroom. The interpretivist theoretical framework holds that through more personal relationships with the participants a researcher is able to gain access to deep meanings embedded in students' lives. Also, I adopted qualitative methods by using myself as an instrument: observation and interview. From the interpretivist perspective, an inquiry cannot be separated from a researcher's value. Therefore, I kept a research journal to help establish the trustworthiness of this study. Also in relation to trustworthiness, I adopted other methods; this is discussed in the section of trustworthiness on page 148. In terms of data analysis, I used open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) as inductive data analysis can be defined as a process to make sense of data without applying a prior theory.

Feminism.

> There are many feminisms, and one of the strengths of this proliferating category is that it continues to reinvent itself strategically, shifting and mutating given existing political agendas, power relations, and identity strategies. (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p. 8)

Feminism as a theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998; Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) has guided this case study in connection with constituting the conceptual framework of gender and its design. Due to complexities and contradictions among feminist scholars

with respect to the origin of the oppression of females and the political strategies to establish equity, feminism can hardly be categorized as merely a theoretical perspective (Reinharz, 1992).

Among a broad range of feminist scholars, especially a group of scholars oriented toward post-structuralism in the ECE field, or education (Blaise, 2005; Davies, 2003; MacNaughton, 2000; Walkerdine, 1990), I have constructed the conceptual framework to appreciate girls' constructions of girlhood. Also, reflexivity and reciprocity as emphasized by feminist methodology were considered in the design of this study in order to scrutinize my positionalities in every phase of this study and my power relationships with participants. I discuss how reflexivity and reciprocity have been established in the methodology in the next section

Reflexivity.

> . . . the inquirer her/himself [should] be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results of research. That is, the class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint. (Harding, 1987, p. 9)

Feminism, contrary to positivism, denies the distant and value-free role of a researcher in doing a study; rather, it clarifies that a researcher's positionality is consciously and unconsciously embedded in her research (Harding, 1987; McRobbie, 2000; Reinharz, 1992). Instead of hiding or denying the connection between a researcher and a research project, feminist research emphasizes the revelation of a researcher's positionalities in order to overcome the "pseudo-objectivity" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 258)

asserted in positivist inquiry. Therefore, a feminist researcher is required to analyze herself in the same manner as her participants (Harding, 1987; Villenas, 2000).

Recently, many qualitative inquiries have been made in the same vein as feminism in terms of their giving emphasis to reflexivity. Some of them tend to perceive reflexivity as a strategy for establishing trustworthiness. But, feminist methodology demands that a researcher move beyond such a simple conceptualization. Reflexivity in feminist research is the critical evaluation and scrutiny of a researcher's positionalities in conducting research, as well as the power relationships between a researcher and participant (Harding, 1987; Lather, 1991; Wolf, 1996).

Employing feminism as the theoretical perspective (Harding, 1987; Lather, 1991; Reinharz, 1992), I critically examined how I pursued this study as "a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests" (Harding, 1987, p. 9). Reflection on my positionalities—my limitations and possibilities as a researcher caused by my positionalities—was done through writing a research journal and participating in informal discussions with various people. Particularly, the research journal included the following points: 1) why/how I have been engaged in this study, 2) what aspects of my positionalities made me pay attention to participants' certain behaviors or talk, and 3) how my positionality has affected my interpretation of the data. My positionalities in conducting this study will be clearly presented in the following section of the research. Also, it will be revealed in more subtle ways in my interpretation and analysis of the participants' constructions of girlhood.

Reciprocity.

Relationships with participants are another subject of reflexivity in feminist research (Hey, 1997; McRobbie, 2000; D. Wolf, 1996). Many feminist scholars have traditionally called for building rapport or close relationships with participants in order to avoid exploitation or objectification of participants (Reinharz, 1992). As a further step in building intimacy with participants, several feminist scholars (Hey, 1997; Lather, 1991, Villenas, 2000, DeVault, 1996; Goldstein, 2000) suggest that a researcher should give more critical attention to the power imbalance between a researcher and participants. Hey (1997), in particular, indicates that exploitation is unavoidable when researchers study less-powerful participants. She addresses the necessity to critically evaluate the power relations between participants and researchers:

> The girls' general toleration of a nosy intruder signified a potentially exploitative situation. Such conditions are an implacable fact of researching on those less powerful than oneself. . . Despite seeking to establish non-exploitative field relations, I was never able to evade the facts that as a white woman with a middle-class education not only was I generally more powerful than most of the girls but my agenda was in part to appropriate parts of their lives for my own use. . . What is required is not only more reflexivity (about who 'we' are) but also a more finessed sense of how these power relations (including those of research) shift and are contested by their subject/objects in the everyday. (Hey, 1997, p. 49)

With the critical recognition of an unbalanced power relationship with the participants in this study, I considered reciprocity drawn from Lather (1991) in the design of this study. In *Getting Smart* (1991), Lather demands a researcher proposing an emancipatory study to critically reflect on whether the emancipatory purpose is actualized in the research design; more specifically she suggests that a researcher utilize research methods to

transform the unbalanced power relationship between a researcher and participants into an established reciprocity.

Reciprocity, Lather explains, is to "give and take a mutual negotiation of meaning and power" (1991, p. 57), more than the mere establishment of an interactive or intimate relationship between a researcher and participants. In reciprocal relationships, participants become collaborative partners in co-constructing meaning, rather than passive subjects producing data. In order to invite participants as co-constructors of meaning, Lather claims the need for reflexive interviews, which were repeatedly conducted in "an interactive and dialogic manner" (1991, p. 60). I therefore included reflexive interviews with participants as Lather suggests. In reflexive interviews, participants collaboratively constructed meanings within their lives with other participants or with me instead of simply providing answers to a researcher's questions. While I was listening and watching participants in interviews, I gradually ended up appreciating Korean girls' constructions of girlhood. In addition, reciprocity with participants was recorded in a research journal.

Based on the epistemological foundation, constructionism, this research as feminist interpretivist inquiry endeavored to explore participants' perspectives on the constructions of girlhood in a Korean kindergarten class. The research questions were answered not solely through close, extended observation of the participants' constructing and negotiating girlhoods, but also through personal interaction with the participants. As the critical instrument for data collection and data analysis, my positionality as a researcher was also examined.

The Researcher's Positionalities

Before putting the participants and their lived experiences at the center of further writing, I shall detail my own positionalities. From the positivist perspective, my positionalities should remain hidden or repressed because of their potential to compromise the study's objectivity. However, as I mentioned earlier, feminism compels a researcher to publicize her positionalities as "the researcher's standpoint" (Rienharz, 1992, p. 259). Following this, I focus on how my positionalities guided me in conducting this study and colored my way of seeing and interacting with participants within and outside the research setting. In other words, I clarify what kind of filters participants appearing here passed through.

My positionalities were fragmented, modified, and multiplied whenever I faced a different issue, person, event, or idea within the research setting (Narayan, 1993). Also, intensive analysis of data and writing representations created layers in my positionalities. Furthermore, my shifting positionalities, compounded with numerous facets, are internally discordant and even contradictory. As a result, my positionalities generated tensions and complexities that complicated my role as a researcher in and out of the research setting. Particularly, Villenas' (1996) injunction to consider the positionalities of a researcher within the research context of power and privilege forced me to be more critically sensitive to my positionalities.

I am a female Korean researcher steeped in the feminized field of ECE as a pre-service teacher, teacher, graduate student, and researcher. I was brought up as the first child in a patriarchcial and working-class family. I am a heterosexual female regulated by

Korean society's compulsive heterosexuality. I was returning as a researcher to a place I had previously worked; I carry a feminist critical perspective on my previous teaching experience. In addition, a stay in Western society and my reliance on Western thought had transformed my epistemological stance as a Korean.

Insider-Outsider

> Identity [of a researcher] is not automatically associated with superior insight. (DeVault, 1996, p. 40)

I was born, raised, educated, and employed in Korea before coming to the U.S. for pursuing a doctoral degree. Even during this separation, I remained there emotionally and psychologically. It is no exaggeration to say that my Korean citizenship and familiarity with Korean culture drove me to select Korean young children for this study. When I made the decision to research Korean girls, I perceived myself as an insider based on our common heritage. Maybe, I thought, I would assume the epistemic privilege of an insider's understanding of Korean girls' in-depth or authentic meanings of girlhood. In fact, what I had in common with the participants made most of the data collection run smoothly. It did not, however, guarantee that I would have intimate knowledge of the participants' girlhoods (Kanuha, 2000).

Assuming myself to be an insider, I failed to perceive my positionalities as being "relative, crosscut by other differences, and often situational and contingent" (DeVault, 1996, p. 40). As I entered the research setting, I was not attentive to the multiplicities of girlhoods among us. I categorized the participants and myself as "we," a unified and coherent group of "Korean girls" ignoring the three decades separating us. Simply

speaking, as a 20th century working-class girl, I was an outsider to girls of the 21st century middle-class. Not just the age gap but dissimilar life experiences, social class, cultural and regional environment, family background, and so on, increased the distance between their girlhoods and my adulthood, and highlighted my statues as an outsider. For instance, "sexy" was not a word that had registered in my girlhood. Hearing this risqué word in the research setting raised a red flag. Notwithstanding my usage of similar words in my adult life, from my point of view as a former teacher, I was disturbed by the 5-and 6-year-old girls' using this word.

However, my position as an outsider to 21st century girlhood was not fixed; as I shared their experiences and their physical space (Narayan, 1993, Villenas, 1996), my outsider status was progressively moderated. As I continued there, I gradually considered matters regarding when, why, and how girls spelled-out the word, "sexy," rather than to the mere fact that 5- and 6-year-old girls verbalized it. I noticed that several participants used *sexy* when describing something heterosexually romantic, not sensual, physical, or even necessarily sexualized. In addition, the desired bodies or bodily performance was expressed and valued as sexy by the girls. I observed from a 21st century girl's perspective their embedded desire in the use of the provocative word, not from an adult or 20th century girlhood perspective.

Within the research setting, my status as an insider-outsider fluctuated from situation to situation. As Villenas (1996) points out, "As researchers, we can be insiders and outsiders to a particular community of research participants at many different levels and at different times" (p.722). That is, as a researcher I was an insider and outsider

both—not either/or—in and out of the research setting. My positionalities working along the hyphen between insider and outsider (Fine, as cited in Villenas, 1996) forces me to be sensitive to my biases about Korean girlhoods.

Previous Teacher-Returning Researcher

I worked for five years in the research setting as an assistant and a lead teacher. This experience benefited me as a researcher in a kindergarten classroom. First, I was able to make a smooth transition to the research setting because I already knew the daily routines, like the songs and rhymes, the various classroom materials, and the general expectations of young children. Second, I appreciated the fundamental principles that formed and regulated the lived experiences of the participants in the research setting. Third, I was accepted by the faculty not only for having worked there, but also for my teacher-like attitude. Although I presented myself as an "atypical adult who will not tell them what to do or attempt to control their behavior" (Corsaro, 2003, p. 6); the classroom teacher in an interview pointed out the remaining teacher-like attitude in how I interacted with students.

On the other hand, my experience dictated my performance as a researcher. First, I was struggling to envision myself as a researcher in a classroom. For me, the classroom is a space strongly associated with the roles of a teacher and a student. Despite my previous experience in conducting research in a classroom, being in the classroom as a researcher was emotionally uncomfortable. Whenever I was in a classroom as something other than a teacher, I felt the desire to teach the participants more correctly, in order to

be closer to the young children. Witnessing the special bond between the participants and the teacher, I may also have wished to have such bonds. Moreover, my familiarity with a classroom setting brought up old memories and made adjusting to the researcher's role more difficult. Although I generally succeeded in managing the desire to teach, I did not wash away all the habits or attitudes I gained from being a kindergarten teacher. They appeared unbeknownst to me in my "teacher-like" presence. Occasionally, I found myself craning my neck to check that all was going smoothly in a classroom.

Next, my education and training as a teacher colored my perspective on young children. In spite of my focus on the students' constructions of girlhood in Ms. Jung's class, I wasn't immune from making judgments regarding the participants' development. Certain types of young children's talk and behavior were problematized through my teacher-like lens. My reaction to the girls' usage of "sexy" is one example. Finally, as a former teacher I had established a certain expectation of "good practice" in a kindergarten classroom. I thus sometimes found myself assessing the classroom teacher's practice, which, needless to say, was not the focus of my study.

My role as a researcher was further complicated because, as mentioned earlier, I selected my former school as the research setting. Returning to my backyard (Peshkin, as cited in Malone, 2003), I was concerned about causing discomfort to the faculty with my power and privilege as a university researcher (Goldstein, 2000). Initially, I felt that my approach to treating the classroom teachers and other faculty with respect and honesty worked well. I had smoothly insinuated myself into their daily routines. As the study progressed, however, I realized I was trapped by the established hierarchy (Deutsch, 2004;

Malone, 2003) and felt pressure to protect my previous relationships with the lead teacher (Goldstein, 2000).

Contrary to an oft-cited power imbalance between researcher and participants by a feminist researcher (Wolf, 1996), I constrained myself based on my partially lower status in the research setting. Deutsch (2004) and Malone (2003) similarly refer to the complexity caused by their less powerful position compared to the participants. In particular, Deutsch (2004) questions about the impact of the previously gendered power on her ability to create a comfortable interview atmosphere with participants and for herself. Related to this, I wrote the following in the research journal:

> Memos to myself , "Need to question to Ms. Jung", were often pushed away because I were dreadfully afraid of opening a discussion that would end up criticizing her practice. I had felt comfortable to talk about anything related to students with Ms. Jung. We actually secretly shared the emotional denial of girls' struggle over friendship; sometimes, we chatted about students as though we were gossiping. In doing so, I felt like I was returning back to the time when I was a colleague of hers. Despite proximity and closeness to her, I could not raise certain issues, such as the girls' habitual silences in classroom discussion, in reflexive interviews. I did not know how I respectfully positioned myself in a different place from her. (RJ 10262006)

The teacher was a senior teacher of mine when I worked at that school. In spite of my change from a junior teacher to a university researcher, my subordinate relationship to her remained unchanged. Because the previous relationship was decided by age and experience in the ECE field, my new positionality as a university researcher did not change anything between us, especially in regard to my raising issues with her. In addition, the pressure to respect the participants solidified my paralysis in searching for a space in which both of us listened to each other without fear of intimidating the other.

During data collection, I occasionally felt that I was "a novice" all over again. I found from the research journal that I continuously avoided asking her difficult questions in weekly reflexive interviews. I do not think that the narrow and tense space between her and me was entirely forged by this power imbalance. It may have been the consequence of my resistance to the idea of making equal relationships with certain people, in this case, an older and more experienced person. In other words, it may have been my resistance to adjusting to the Western perspective on equality.

Although I felt partially paralyzed, it does not mean that I was without power and privilege over the classroom teacher. While I have concentrated on analyzing data and writing, I have often faced the fact that I am the only one who can give voice to the shared lived experiences of participants in the research setting. Therefore, I have struggled with the possibility of distorting participants' daily practices in a written representation through writing a research journal. While I closely scrutinize the authority and power that I exercise as an author, I notice that I tended to negotiate my authority and power differently depending on whom I was writing about. That is, I had fewer reservations about portraying young children than in portraying the classroom teacher, even though young children were the main focus in the research setting. Whenever I wrote about the classroom teacher, I seemed to work hard to put myself in her shoes until I made a story in which she could exist innocently blind of gender in her practice. In doing this, as Goldstein (2000) does, I "could not allow her to be less than perfect" (p. 527) in my writing.

A Researcher-the Researched

As a researcher following the theoretical perspective of feminism, I actively reflected on myself in respect to the limitations and possibilities that I have been carrying as a researcher. My initial conception of myself as a separate being from the participants, however, gradually shifted by observing young girls who are also constrained and enabled by ideologies, beliefs, values that valorize specific way of performing gender in Korean society. As Jones (1996) addresses, while I observed young girls in the research setting, I recognized myself in terms of how I had been constructed as a female. My understanding of myself as a gendered being also shifted my way of observing young girls. These numerous circular movements between the participants and myself intervened in my way of viewing and constructing meaning from the participants' lives in the classroom.

Being in a classroom with participants resurfaced and revitalized my memories of being a 5- year-old girl and also of being a teacher for 5-and 6-year-old girls. Multiple existences in a research setting due to previous experiences with participants are also discussed in Thorne (1993). She states that her memories of childhood surfaced and insinuated themselves in the processes of data collection and data analysis. Admitting the engagement of her memories with the way she pursued the role of a researcher, Thorne (1993) maintains the need to include memories:

> Were my moments of remembering, the times when I felt like a ten-year-old girl, a source of distortion or insight? Both, I believe. The identification enhanced my sense of what it feels like to be a fourth- and fifth-grader girl in a school setting. I lived that world in another time and place, but the similarities are evocative. Memory, like observing is a way of knowing and can be a rich resource. But memories are also fragile and mysterious,

> continuously reconstructed by the needs of the present and by yearnings and fears of the past. Memories can distort as well as enrich present perceptions. (p. 26)

Although I did not plan this study as an endeavor to analyze myself, the subject of this study has guided me to answer questions I had for long time, but was unable to answer as a little girl and as a kindergarten teacher. As I became close to the participants and appreciated the meanings generated by their discursive practices as girls, I faced fissures and distortions hidden within my "pleated" girlishness—I borrow this expression from Richarson (2000)'s "*Skirting a pleated text*." Every time I skirted my pleated girlishness, I tended to be more sensitive to girls' desire, passion, resentment, fear, complexity, contradiction and resistance embedded in mine.

Double Marginalized/Marginalizing Positionality

> I needed first to ask myself. How am I . . . damaged by my own marginality? Furthermore, how am I complicit in the manipulation of my identities such that I participate in my own colonization and marginalization and, by extension, that of my own people—those with whom I feel a cultural and collective connectedness and commitment? (Villenas, 1996, p. 721)

Throughout all my teaching, I had been aware that students in my classroom established gendered practices. Whenever I witnessed the reproduction of gender stereotypes in my class, such as girls' obsessively playing a mom, I was confused and disappointed. Despite my consciousness about the gendered practices of young children, as a teacher I had barely identified how gender significantly organized my students' lived experiences and how sexist ideas were embedded in my classroom practices. While I intentionally guided girls to give them equal opportunities, I inadvertently criticized the

girls regarding their passivity and apathy toward boys' dominant centers such as blocks or computer centers. At that time, I did not understand the meaning of the girls' distance from so-called masculine centers or their desire for so-called feminized centers, in particular pretending to be a mom. To describe my previous attitude again, I can say that I had been gender blind.

My teaching practices were partially formed by the tendency of the ECE field to pay less attention to gender. In addition, my identity manipulated by the Korean patriarchy would be another reason for gender insensitive teaching. I was raised as the first child of my family, not the first female child. None of the advantages usually given to the first child were withdrawn because of my sex. Enjoying more equitable opportunities in my family, I had not noticed the systematic marginalization of females, including myself, at the societal level. I innocently believed that all things are individual matters. With this belief in individual rights and autonomy, I was unconsciously complicit in supporting the Korean patriarchy. The distorted and manipulated view was projected upon my teaching practices and my attitude toward girls in my classroom. That is, as a teacher, I failed to realize how my identity, marginalized by the dominant culture, also marginalized girls in my classroom (Villenas, 1996, 2000).

After moving to a Western academic setting, I was fascinated by the works of feminist scholars (Davies, 2003; MacNaughton, 2000; Thorne, 1993; Walkerdine, 1990). These readings turned my perspectives on the gendered practices of young children upside down. After passing through a self-critique of my teaching practices, gender blind attitudes, and complicity in Korean patriarchy and heterosexism, I started filtering

everything through gender and rebuilt my positionalities as a researcher drawing on feminism. Feminism obviously helped me to bring my marginalized position as a female to the center and presented unseen possibilities for being a researcher from a positivist perspective. However, everything has a cost.

An Apparatus of Neo-Colonialism

Regardless of the possibilities presented by Western feminism, I should admit that I am becoming an intellectual colonizing apparatus to solidify the current colonization of Korean academia by Western thought. And this is unavoidable. It was probably foreseen, since I made the decision to purse a doctorate at a Western institution. My reliance on feminism would be necessary for giving voice to the unheard voices of girls. However, by absorbing feminism "without recognizing or attempting to alter the inequities that created the original distinctions" (Cannella & Viruru, 2004, p. 147) between a Western feminist voice and my Korean voice, I was complicit in the colonization of myself.

Several questions about my colonizing/colonized positionality as a researcher surfaced: Do I, as a colonized researcher, colonize Korean girls by imposing the Western lens upon Korean girls' lived experiences? Do I bring the voices of Korean girls to Western academia in order to gain academic credentials? Do I invest enough effort to search for Korean epistemology? And, do I play the role of "McDonalds" in Korean academia?

I have dealt with my positionalities by shedding light on five different aspects in this section. I personally think that the aspects have been deeply and discursively related

to the entire process in conducting this study. I first discussed positionalities as an insider-outsider of Korean 21st century girls. Because I was returning as a researcher to my backyard, my positionalities generated tensions and complexities in doing a researcher's role. As data collection progressed, I gradually became "the researched" by participants and also myself. Then, I moved to my marginalized-marginalizing positionality as a female in Korean patriarchy. Also, I referred to my gender-blind teaching as complicit with Korean patriarchy. The final aspect I raised is about my positionality as an apparatus of Neo-Colonialism in Korean young children and the Korean ECE field.

The tensions and complexity caused by my multifaceted positionalities mentioned in the above, I think, provided possibilities for and imposed limitations on pursuing this research in and out of the research setting. My positionalities discussed above look like numerous pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that can finally have a coherent unity. However, each piece of my positionality has not allowed me to create a final picture. Instead of fitting together, the pieces are conflicting and contradictory and are also deeply entangled with each other. Instead of hiding or ignoring the interconnectedness of my positionalities with this study and the complexities and contradictions embedded in myself as a researcher, I have endeavored to critically reflect on them through writing in my research journal and through peer-debriefing during the process of data collection, data analysis, and writing-up. Therefore, it is proper to depict that the following interpretation and analysis are consequences of filtering Korean girls' lived experiences in a kindergarten class through my positionalities, which have altered, multiplied and even contradicted themselves.

Ethics

The ethical standards presented by the American Educational Research Association (AERA) —no physical or psychological harm to participants, fair and respectful treatment of participants, and integrity—have been seriously considered in this research project. Many scholars voluntarily hold themselves to a higher set of ethical obligations when planning to conduct research work with children or other less powerful groups of people (Coady, 2001; Graue & Walsh, 1998; Hatch, 1998). On top of the general ethical obligations, I have kept a higher set of ethical responsibilities, which are based on feminist methodology, and which are apparent in the critical reflexivity of my power relationships with the participants (Deutsch, 2004; Wolf, 1996). As mentioned above, whether I treated participants with fairness and respect was critically reflected in a research journal and in reflexive interviews with the classroom teacher and various people.

Aiming to move beyond the mandatory consideration of them, I attempted to establish reciprocity with the participants (Lather, 1991). In doing so, I actively invited participants to contribute to the process of meaning-making by listening to them through formal and informal reflexive interviews (Lather, 1991). My ethical obligation to treat participants as co-constructors of meanings stemmed from my perspective of young children as autonomous and capable agents within their cultural, historical, and social context (Connolly, 1998; Corsaro, 2003; Davies, 2003). In reflexive interviews, participants had a space in which they had the authority to construct the meanings of girlhood, rather than to answer prepared questions.

On the other hand, I always recognized my young participants' vulnerabilities in relation to me, due to the discrepancies between us: physical strength; access to social, cultural, and intellectual resources, and the ability to use language (Graue & Walsh, 1998). The natural and undeniable power imbalance between young children and adults further exposes young participants' vulnerabilities. Therefore, I carefully considered the patterns of my relationships with participants, focusing my attention on whose desires and interests were satisfied in each encounter (Hatch, 1995).

Research Setting and Participants

To describe Korean girls' construction and negotiation of girlhood, I completed the data collection in one 5-year-old classroom at a Korean private kindergarten. An institutional setting was selected based on the recognition of the significance of school in young children's gender construction. The ease of accesses to young children, who are main participants in this study, also was considered in deciding to conduct this study at a school.

H Kindergarten

The kindergarten will hereafter be called H Kindergarten to protect its identification. I accessed H Kindergarten for this study because I had a personal connection with it. Before I resumed academic life as a doctoral student, I worked in the kindergarten as an assistant teacher and a lead teacher for five years. The tensions and complexities in doing research in one's backyard were illustrated in the previous section

on my positionality. I gathered data for this study from one class of 5-and 6-year olds and their teachers.

H Kindergarten is located in a low- to middle-class community in a northern area of Seoul. It is a modern two-story building with a spacious playground that has 6 classrooms. Each floor has three classrooms. On the first floor, there is an auditorium that is used for special events such as admission and graduation ceremonies, etc., or regular curriculum activities such as bi-weekly Monday gatherings, music lessons, P.E. for 3- and 4-year-olds, or physical activities. Offices for teachers and the director are located on the second floor. Outside the building, about half the playground is covered with bricks and the other half with sand. In the sandy area there are numerous types of fixed playground equipment. On the south part of the sandy area, there is a large-sized Little Tikes slide for 3-year-olds. Opposite it there is a pavilion in which participants and I frequently had informal interviews.

Students in H Kindergarten.

H Kindergarten has three different age groups 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds; the majority of students are from a broad range of middle-class families. Many students from upper-middle class areas commute by school bus or with parents. Because the kindergarten sets up equal quotas for each gender group when it selects students, the number of selected girls and boys is similar, though boys' applications outnumber those of girls. The selected students are divided into two groups based on to which bus route they take. In assigning

students to each class, the balances in relation to the date of birth, gender, and bus route are considered.

Faculty and staffs at H Kindergarten.

Each class of H Kindergarten has one lead teacher and one assistant teacher. Therefore, H Kindergarten had 22 teachers at the time of research, from a first year teacher to a 20-year veteran. Every member of the faculty holds a B.A. with a teaching certificate for kindergartners. Some have M.A. s in ECE or were pursuing an M.A. at the time of data collection. Due to similar educational backgrounds, faculty members largely agreed with the child-centeredness and play-oriented curriculum of H Kindergarten. Each class also has an assistant teacher who is an undergraduate or graduate student pursuing a major related to ECE or to becoming a certified teacher with a B.A. There were several non-faculty staff members who interacted with the students on a daily basis, such as the kitchen cafeteria staff, the bus driver, the maintenance personnel, and the secretaries.

Curriculum at H Kindergarten.

The practices of H Kindergarten, following the *6th Edition of Korean National Curriculum for Kindergarten* (1998), are organized with a philosophical and pedagogical emphasis on child-centeredness. Therefore, children's interests have a role as the fundamental principle for organizing daily practices. Everyday practice at H Kindergarten is centered on a theme decided by student discussion. Because children's interests go into deciding the theme, it occasionally seems related to the academic domain. For instance,

the final theme I observed in the research setting was “making a cookie house.” After students choose a theme, a teacher brainstorms possible directions and establishes a tentative plan to pursue while striking a balance with diverse types of activities (e.g., individual activities for indoor free-choice activity—center time in the U.S. ECE field—learning a song, dance, game, play, or making a story, etc.) and five developmental areas: physical health, social relationships, expression, language, and inquiry, which are regarded as the domains of child-development clarified in the Korean national curriculum (KMEHR, 1998). As the theme progresses, the classroom environment begins to fill with related materials and students’ works.

Based on its practices, H Kindergarten has maintained a reputation in its district as an exemplary kindergarten. In addition, this institution has continued a close relationship with a university providing pre-service teacher education programs for early childhood education. While I was in the research setting, pre-service teachers from the university came to the classroom for their weekly classroom placement. From my perspective, students’ experiences of being observed by various people would enhance their ability to deal with stress caused by strangers like me.

Daily lives in H Kindergarten.

H Kindergarten mainly provides a half-day program to three different age groups. Six classes meet in the morning from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M., and three classes meet in the afternoon from 2:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. Some of the 4- and 5-year-old students from the morning classes remain at the kindergarten after they finish their

morning classes. These students gather in one classroom, have lunch and start their afternoon program with a different teacher and an assistant teacher. This afternoon program is an alternative all-day program in H Kindergarten for students from dual-income families.

The daily routine of a half-day program is organized around various activities, such as morning gathering, discussions, indoor free-choice activity, playground time, large-group activity, story time, etc. They do not necessarily happen in the same order in each classroom, as each teacher adjusts the daily schedule to match the daily curriculum and the students' needs within the given bus schedule.

Depending on the locations of their residence, two groups of students for each class arrive with a 40 minute time gap between them. This time is usually used for intensive discussion between students and teachers, because this is a time of day when the student-teacher ratio is low. I will call this early group Group A and the later group Group B. Group A begins with the morning gathering and classroom discussion when they arrive at 9 o'clock. This discussion lasts around 40 minutes or less. In discussions, students or the teacher bring materials related to an ongoing theme, introduce them, and address questions. When Group A finishes classroom discussion, Group B arrives. While Group B does classroom discussion with the lead teacher, Group A goes to the playground with an assistant teacher. Students can meet friends from other classrooms and play together during the playground time. Playground time is a more child-directed period of time with few regulations and less teacher involvement.

After Group B finishes classroom discussion, the entire class gathers together and has indoor free-choice activity for at least one hour. During indoor free-choice activity, the longest period of the day, students have the chance to get hands-on experience with the classroom theme. A classroom at H Kindergarten generally has ten centers, including art, construction, dramatic play, language, math, puzzle, science, book, computer, and snack. Every student generally has "free choice" in terms of where, when, and with whom they go. Occasionally a teacher recommends a particular activity in order to balance developmental areas or to ensure their involvement in activities related to a theme. During indoor free-choice activity, students have snacks provided and prepared by the Kindergarten. Sometimes students have snacks all together, or, they can schedule to have their snack by themselves considering their physical needs and friends' schedule.

Except for special events (field trips and bi-weekly Monday gatherings) large or small group activities such as games, play, music, or dance are usually planned; in most cases, these take a half hour. The teacher leads a large or small group activity to match the theme. Only music is taught by an outside instructor, a doctoral student in ECE. If necessary, large group activities can be held in the auditorium. Occasionally, large group activities are canceled to extend indoor free-choice activity. A teacher reads a story or poem to students before they go home or during transition between two time blocks. After Group A goes home, Group B does what Group A did before Group B arrived.

The Research Setting

Students.

The student body in the research setting is comprised of 31 5-and 6-year-old students. Ms. Jung, a pseudonym, is the lead teacher and Ms. Shin an assistant teacher. As the result of careful assignment based on gender, date of birth, and arrival time, Ms. Jung's class consists of four similarly sized groups: 8 girls and 8 boys in Group A and 7 girls and 8 boys in Group B. Reflecting the makeup of the entire student body, students in Ms. Jung's class come from low- to upper-middle class families. Reflecting Korean society, Ms. Jung's class was ethnically homogeneous, and all students are permanent Korean residents.

Ms. Jung and Ms. Shin.

Ms. Jung has been in the ECE field for over two decades, including years as an undergraduate student, a graduate student, a teacher, a teacher educator, and also a teacher researcher. She completed her B.A. and M.A. in ECE. She has worked at H Kindergarten since 1998. In the north district where H Kindergarten is located, Ms. Jung is one of several exemplary teachers. She has a number of opportunities to participate in various types of research projects. In fact, during data collection, Ms. Jung presented her practices twice: once for peer-teachers of the same district and again for Korean E.C.E. scholars at a conference meeting.

Ms. Jung's practices are grounded mainly in child-centeredness. But she does not remain as an invisible hand in the students' learning or as a bystander who waits for a teachable moment. Rather, Ms. Jung takes an active role in discussion and students'

activities by making suggestions or asking meaningful questions. When I asked her if she was comfortable having greater participation in students' learning, Ms. Jung shared with me how she ended up reconceptualizing a teacher's role as an active participant in students' construction of knowledge. Ms. Jung organizes the daily routine by merging the two groups and, as much as possible, doing activities together. For this, Ms. Jung usually offers two separate indoor free-choice activities to each group.

Ms. Shin and Ms. Lee are assistant teachers. Both are senior students in the relevant department of ECE. Because Ms. Shin was not able to work on Fridays, Ms. Lee was in the classroom.

Data Collection

This section describes the entire period of time from when I first entered the research setting to when I left it, concentrating on what I did. The rationale behind selecting a particular kindergarten for this study is clarified in the first section. I next detail the procedure of gaining access to the research setting: finding and entering the research setting and gaining permission. Performing the role of researcher in the research setting follows. Then, I move to collecting data, more precisely types of data I collected and the way to collect data. The last section is about leaving the research setting.

Ms. Jung's Class: The Research Setting

I approached H kindergarten, which I worked before, to pursue data collection for this study because I had personal connections with the director, the vice-director, and Ms.

Jung. I also considered the daily practices of H kindergarten in that it provided students long periods of less-structured time when students freely interacted with others. My familiarity with these practices was another motive for this decision.

For these reasons, in May of 2005 I contacted the director and the vice-director of H Kindergarten about doing the study. After a couple of days, I received verbal consent from the vice-director. At that time, she informed me that I would be observing the class of Ms. Jung, the head teacher and the most experienced at H Kindergarten. Although this departed from my plan to find a voluntary participant with an interest in gender construction of young children, I accepted the institution's decision.

I later heard from Ms. Jung that she thought she was the right person to handle the psychological disturbance caused by my presence (RJ 08232005). Ms. Jung explained her comfort with me was a result of her long experience teaching and her previous relationship with me. Also Ms. Jung briefly gave me inside information regarding the personal or professional situation of other faculty members. I assumed Ms. Jung's experience participating in research was another reason for her decision.

Entering the Research Setting

My entry into the research setting was designed carefully in order to establish "membership status and an insider's perspective" (Corsaro, 2000, p. 182) drawing on ideas from Corsaro (1981, 2000), who completed ethnographic studies in various preschool settings. According to Corsaro (1981, 2000), the researcher has to consider the following aspects: 1) dealing with and developing the trust of a range of adult

gatekeepers; 2) acquiring a working knowledge of the social structure, of the nature of interpersonal relations, and of the daily routines in the setting; and 3) gaining the acceptance of the teachers and children.

Dealing with and developing the trust of a range of adult gatekeepers.

As Corsaro states (1981), there were various gatekeepers (i.e., faculty or staff) who influenced my access to young participants in H Kindergarten. Although most adult gatekeepers were not participants in this study, I tried to establish a more equitable relationship with the participants following feminist scholars (Deutsche, 2004; D. Wolf, 1996). One of my efforts was to follow the daily routine of H Kindergarten. I arrived in the classroom at least 45 minutes before the bell, as did most faculty members. Also, I tried to adjust my role to the contextual needs of the research setting. For instance, I took an assistant teacher's role while Ms. Shin filled in for an absent teacher. In addition, I offered myself as an available resource in a context without students.

My personal connection to the field lessened the practical difficulties in finding a research field, also in dealing with gatekeepers at the administrative level. It caused, however, some tension with other faculty and staff members who were cautious about my presence. So I carefully kept myself away from the administrators except for informal interviews with the vice-director (Thorne, 1993). Besides my connection to the administrators, other factors complicated the relationships between the faculty and me. My former employment at H Kindergarten and age had already determined hierarchical

relationships between the faculty and me. Additionally, my status as a doctoral student and a researcher solidified the imbalance of power between us.

As data collection progressed, I made more close relationships with some of the faculty members. We shared personal issues while we met in the kitchen in the morning for tea. However, as a result of complicated issues between the gatekeepers and me and the busy schedule of the faculty, my general relationships with most faculty members and staff in H Kindergarten ended up being polite and impersonal rather than the personal, equitable, and collaborative relationships I had hoped for. Despite our distant relationship with each other, I do not remember any incidents of being watched or limited by the other gatekeepers.

Acquiring the working knowledge.

The social structure, nature of interpersonal relations, and daily routines in a research field, according Corsaro (1981), are very useful knowledge to help a researcher adjust to the research setting. In this study, because I went back to the kindergarten where I had worked before, it took a relatively short time to recover the working knowledge needed for understanding the field. In order to catch up on my absence from the field, I tried to get to know new faculty members by staying in the kitchen for informal chats. Although I initially passed gatekeepers and gained permission to be in the classroom, the initial passing did not assure a smooth journey. Building trust with the faculty and staff was a long-term daily task.

Gaining the acceptance and trust of children.

Once the classroom for data collection was decided on, I presented specific information to Ms. Jung about my methods for collecting data, the expected timelines, and my role as a participant observer. In doing so, I notified Ms. Jung that my schedule and methods were subject to negotiation with her. At that time, Ms. Jung and I agreed on my distance from the role of instruction or classroom management.

Formal field entry occurred on the first day of the fall semester, 2005. In order to make a smooth entry into the field, I followed Corsaro (1981) and employed a strategy of gradual incremental increase of my stay in the research setting. As the visiting time became longer, my role as a researcher slightly shifted from that of an observer-as-participant to a participant-as-observer (Glesne, 1999). This strategy, I expected, would ease whatever student discomfort and confusion might be caused by my presence in the classroom. For the first two weeks, I was in the observation booth or at the margin of the classroom at various times as the students did different activities. From this vantage point, I figured out the routine of Ms. Jung's classroom and the social dynamic among the students, in particular the girls' relationships with others. While sitting at the margin of the classroom, I listened to students' ongoing conversations without interrupting, taking notes only. I responded to students only when one initiated a verbal interaction, such as with a question about my identity or my work or nonverbal interaction with me, such as with eye-contact or smiles.

My physical presence in Ms. Jung's classroom caused student curiosity. Even though I went to Ms. Jung's class to observe students as a researcher, the students tended

to do their own research about me (Deutsch, 2004). From the first day in the classroom, I was asked to identify myself. To the frequent question, "Who are you?" I would simply answer, "I am Jaehui Yoon" instead of throwing out information about myself. Some students, dissatisfied, attempted to figure out if I was their new assistant teacher or a student teacher. I clearly denied that I was a teacher. Students in Ms. Jung's class seemed to be confused by my answer. I noticed a couple frowning or cocking their heads. To students asking the reason for my being in a classroom, I explained in a simple and clear way: "I have to write a book in order to graduate from school. Because I am interested in kindergarteners like you, I decided to write a book about kindergartners. That's why I am here" (FN0912200510). After the students knew my reason for being in their classroom, they started demonstrating an interest in what I was doing in the classroom: writing field notes and recording their conversations. This will be discussed in the next section.

As I spent more time in the classroom, students' questions gradually decreased. However, this did not mean that students stopped their investigation of me. In particular, they consistently tested my acceptance or tolerance of their rule-breaking behaviors. In order to relieve the students, I sometimes verbalized that I would not tell anything I saw to Ms. Jung. Besides this, my femaleness was frequently discussed among students; in particular, the way of presenting my body in the classroom. Questions like "Are you wearing perfume?" (FN1027200522) forced me to reflect on how my femaleness affected students' attitude toward me. Mutual researching/researched relationships with participants continued until I left the classroom.

As students' questions about my identity gradually decreased, I consulted with Ms. Jung about the moment to embark on full-time classroom observation. As there was no legitimate criterion by which to make the decision, I heard Ms. Jung's perspectives on the level of students' acceptance. Also, I critically reflected on students' responses to me: whether they showed psychological and emotional discomfort because of me, whether they allowed me to participate in ongoing activities, and whether students perceived me as less authoritative than the teacher (Corsaro, 1981). Ms. Jung and I agreed on a time when the students' would exhibit a less stressful reaction to my presence. In the third week of data collection, I started full-time observation.

Performed role as a researcher.

Many previous studies (Eder, Evans & Parker, 1995; Corsaro, 1981; Thorne, 1993) done in school settings refer to the significance of building an adult role distinctive from a teacher in order to establish more equitable relationships with and to gain the trust of the students. On the other hand, Skelton (2000) and Goldstein (2000) shared responsibility to teach students with classroom teachers in research settings. Skelton illuminates that sharing the responsibility of instruction with a classroom teacher would be more reasonable because students tend to treat a researcher as a semi-teacher regardless of her/his denial of the role of a teacher in school.

In this study, the role of researcher as an atypical adult was decided on in order to secure the maximum possible opportunities to observe students' talk and behaviors in student-led activities. Also, in making this decision, I considered the established

hierarchical order between young children and adults in Korean culture. Taking on the responsibility to instruct students, from my perspective, would clearly highlight the power imbalance between the students and me. Consequently, I tried to position myself in the research setting differently from other adult members as an atypical adult in relation to the students (Corsaro, 2000; Thorne, 1993).

As an atypical adult in Ms. Jung's class, I did not perform roles related to instructing the students in the classroom. In spite of accepting students' suggestions to do some activities, I did not initially make suggestions. More importantly, I was not involved in students' arguments, so as to not be perceived as a conflict-solver. To students' questions about classroom rules or management, I would give indirect answers like, "Well, we need to ask Ms. Jung" (FN 0909200514). By transferring the adult authority to the teacher, I positioned myself in the classroom as a less powerful figure than Ms. Jung. Besides my behaviors, I think, students noticed that I was less powerful than Ms. Jung based on our language practices. Because of honorific forms of words or expressions in Korean, the power relationships were easily understood by students. Furthermore, I did not verbally or nonverbally respond to students' rule-breaking behaviors, nor report them to the teacher. I even stayed some distance from the teacher. As data collection progressed, students recognized my lack of authority in the classroom. For instance, while I was sitting with girls at a snack table, Soo-jin told Hae-in, who had just asked me if she could have one more piece of pie, "Ms. Yoon does not know such a thing." (FN1014200526).

Although I positioned myself as a less authoritative person in the research field, in practical research matters my position became complicated. Throughout the data collection, I was not in a situation where I needed to intervene or terminate students' ongoing activities in order to prevent physical injuries. But I witnessed several incidents in which students were verbally abusive with one another (RJ 11012005). At those moments, I tried to lessen the aggressive tension among the students as Eder, Evans, and Parker (1995) do as non-interventionists. My passive effort raised a question about whether I was a single-minded researcher obsessing over secure data collection rather than an ethical researcher.

Unfortunately, there was no obvious indicator for evaluating whether I was accepted as a regular adult member in the classroom by the students. However, the frequency of invitations from the students to play, their affectionate glances toward me, and their efforts to interact with me were used to estimate the level of students' acceptance of me in the classroom. Students' acceptance of me was continuously noted and reflected through my discussions with Ms. Jung. Moreover, I consciously reflected on my relationship with the students through my writing in my research journal.

Permission Procedures.

I requested formal permission from the adult participants before I embarked on the classroom observation. All consent forms were written in Korean and English. The schedule to distribute student consent forms was decided after consulting with Ms. Jung. I

put the Korean and English student consent forms in each student's bag on the first Friday of being in the research field. In two weeks, I received 29 consents.

Colleting Data

Data on Korean girls' constructions of girlhood in a kindergarten class were gathered in five different ways: 1) field notes from observations of students' speech and behavior; 2) audiotapes of students' conversations; 3) interviews with the students; 4) interviews with the classroom teachers; and 5) my research journals. Because participants in this study were Korean speakers, the verbal data generated in the research field were written and typed in Korean. The issue of translation will be discussed more specifically in the section on data analysis.

In the following section, I will expound on the reasons for collecting a certain type of data and the detailed procedure of collecting such data. The way to sort and organize each data set will also be discussed in the section on data analysis.

Participant observation.

I did participant observation in order to understand the constructions of girlhood following the works of Corsaro (1981) and Thorne (1993). I made visits four times a week to one half-day (four hours a day) program classroom for Korean 5- and 6 year-old children. Every Wednesday, six pre-service teachers visited for classroom placement. Due to the high ratio of adults to children in the classroom, I decided to spend that time doing in-field data analysis. While I observed students as a participant observer, I made

field notes on participants' talk or behaviors. I particularly gave attention to less-structured activities—indoor free-choice activity, playground time, snack, and transition period—in which students' everyday conversations occurred more naturally and frequently.

The location I chose for observation was decided on first, according to where participants, in particular girls, spent their time. In general, I observed a mixed gender group of students or a girls-only group. I paid less attention to boys-only groups because of my expectation that they would produce little data related to constructions of girlhood. The interactions between students and teachers were also observed if they occurred during a less structured activity.

As the data collection advanced, I occasionally followed some students in order to observe them. The selection of students for purposeful observation was made based on prior observations and a tentative interpretation of the data. For instance, I stayed close to Tae-yun after her birthday party. Additionally, I regularly examined which girls were invisible in my field notes to include various aspects of constructions of girlhood. Mi-ra, Hae-in, and Yu-na tended to appear less frequently in my field notes. To make them visible in my participant observation field notes, I occasionally followed them from an appropriate distance.

As a participant observer, I took part in the students' activities and interactions at their invitation. I did not, however, initiate or terminate an activity. I performed a variety of roles in Ms. Jung's class: playmate, assistant to their activities, knowledgeable peer, and responder to students' needs and requests. In fact, the realities of the classroom led

me to experience discomfort in exclusively performing the researcher role. Truthfully, I juggled the two roles of being an ethical person who is attentive to students and of being a productive researcher gathering data. When forced to make a decision about which role to take, I tried to follow the students' lead rather than to dominate or control a situation.

The pattern of my interaction as a participant observer varied by location. For instance, if I observed students in the area of the tables (the art center, puzzle, library, and snack), I sat next to them at the same table and had conversations with them. However, while observing the block or dramatic play center, I sat outside of the centers to limit my interactions with students, taking memos as much as possible instead.

From the first day of observation, I carried a small-sized notebook with a blue pen to write down what I saw, heard, and felt in the research setting. I recorded the initial responses, hunches, feelings, and insights that I had in the field as much as I could. I usually wrote "descriptive notes" and "analytic notes" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) on the same page. I sometimes used abbreviations, pictures, or English words to save time in the research setting. After I left the research setting, I immediately transferred the original field notes from participant observation into electronically typed documents. At this time, information other than words or sentences changed to readable information.

My small notebooks provoked students' interest. In fact, several students pointed out note taking as the difference between my role and that of Ms. Shin's or Ms. Lee's, the assistant teachers (FN 0923200518). I answered honestly students' questions about the field notes, such as why I took notes, how many pages I wrote, or if I recorded who drank mango juice as a snack. In addition, I did not hide the field notes from students when they

asked me to show them. Some students sitting next to me used to read what I wrote loudly despite difficulties in reading my small and scribble-like handwriting, including numerous graphics and English words (FN0908200507).

Audio-recording of students' conversations.

I often recorded participants' conversations by carrying a regular-sized audiotape recorder (Aiwa TP-VS450) or a small-sized MP3 player with a voice recording function (i-bead 300) in the research setting. Due to its ease, I gradually used the MP3 player more and more. Audio recording started one week after I embarked on full-time observation. I did not hide audio-recording devices from the students. While I observed and took field notes, I put audio-recording devices right front of me or in the middle of the tables. However, I did not install or leave the audio-recording devices unattended. Based on experiences from my preliminary study, audio data collected in my absence was hard to transcribe and understand.

In order to introduce an audio recorder to students, I requested some time from Ms. Jung. During the discussion time, I showed the recorder to students and explained the reason for recording (FN 0923200518). After having time to explore an audiotape recorder with students, I told the students that if they did not want to be recorded, they could just ask me to stop recording. In addition, I clarified to students that no one would be able listen to the audiotapes, not even Ms. Jung.

The audio data included information from the field notes from participant observation, as well as some that were missing from the original field notes. Using an

audio recording device helped me to carefully listen to and respond to students by decreasing the pressure to write down as much as possible in the research setting. Moreover, audio data provided a more accurate record of students' conversations with each other and with me (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Finally, by using a recording device, I was able to focus on visual information, such as students' gestures, movements, and facial expressions. The process of organizing audio data and making transcriptions will be discussed in the section on analysis.

When I started recording, Ms. Jung also used a voice recorder to document classroom discussion. Students therefore appreciated the purpose of recording. However, students were more responsive to audio-recording devices that I used in the research setting. They occasionally asked me to stop so that they could listen to their recorded voices. The students' transformed voices from the recorder always made them laugh. In addition, some students in Ms. Jung's class, Ji-hyung (boy) in particular, would shout meaningless sounds or "My precious!," which is a modified line from *The Lord of the Rings*, with a husky voice at the recorder and ask me to play their voices back. Although similar pranks continued until I left the research setting, it wouldn't be fair to say that students were disturbed by the audio-recording devices. The majority of the students in Ms. Jung's class paid less attention to the recording devices. Only a certain group of girls occasionally showed discomfort with being recorded and asked me to stop recording. When these girls repeatedly glanced at the tape recorder and lowered their voices, I stopped recording. They also verbally asked me to stop recording. They even requested that I stop observing while they engaged in a mom play. Later Soo-jin, a member of the

group, explained their requests by saying that they were shy to show their mom play to "others" (FN 1018200510).

Interviews with students.

Interviews with the students were held to generate more in-depth meanings of the constructions of girlhood in the kindergarten classroom. According to Brooker (2001), there is some concern about doing interviews with young children because of their egocentricity and underdeveloped ability to use language. However, Davies (2003) and Connolly (2000) adopt the interview as one of the primary methods for drawing in-depth meanings from young children. As I agreed with Davies and Connolly, I included interviews as a method for gathering students' perspectives on the constructions of girlhood. In particular, by drawing on Lather (1991), the interviews with participants were held in "an interactive and dialogic manner" (p. 60) in order to establish reciprocity.

Interviews with students were generally done in an informal way while I observed indoor free-choice activity, snack time, and playground time as a participant observer. While observing and taking field notes, I asked students to articulate the reasons for their talk and behaviors that were relevant to the constructions of girlhood. In order not to disturb the students' ongoing activities, I carefully examined their responses to my questions and whether they indirectly refused to respond. Informal interviews with the students were included in participant observation field notes. Most interviews took from 10 to 15 minutes.

As data collection progressed, informal interviews with students became quasi-formal. Formal interviews with students were planned when I proposed this study. However, considering the busy schedule of Ms. Jung's class, it was very hard to find an appropriate time to do formal interviews in which students could leave an on-going classroom activity. I subsequently modified the original plan according to the contextual need of the research setting. Instead of formal interviews that required students to leave ongoing classroom activities, I did interviews while students participated in classroom activities with a more predetermined focus to know. For example, I did three different interviews with three cliques of girls in order to ascertain the girls' ideas of a slim body and the social pressures on females. Although the three interviews were done during playground time while they were playing, the ways the interviews progressed were dissimilar from informal interviews done in a reactive manner to students' speech and behaviors.

Before I started quasi-formal interviews, I asked if they wanted to talk with me and told them that they had the right to terminate the interview at any time (Brooker, 2001). In addition, I clarified what I wanted to learn from an interview. In cases when students refused to talk with me, I left the scene. Interview questions were formed and modified in the interview context, based on students' responses (Hatch, 1998). Every interview closed with a debriefing of students' responses and my thanking them. The quasi-formal interviews were transcribed as soon as possible and included in field notes from participant observation.

As an interviewer, I encouraged students to express their understandings and meanings of the constructions of girlhood. Conversations among the girls in the interviews were facilitated by me. During interviews with the students, I paid attention to students' emotional and psychological responses to my questions and to the interview situation (Hatch, 1998). If interviewees demonstrated distress or boredom, I quickly ended the interviews.

Interviews with the teacher.

I had formal and informal reflexive interviews with the teachers who had valuable knowledge and perspectives on participants in this research. Formal interviews with teachers happened before and after the fieldwork. The pre-fieldwork formal interview was for gathering background information about the teacher, the teachers' perspective on girlhood, and the pedagogical considerations in teaching in terms of gender or girlhood. The post-fieldwork interview was held to note the teacher's responses to the overall research procedure. The interviews with the teacher were similar to those with students with respect to emphasis on establishing reciprocity in an interview context.

On the other hand, weekly reflexive informal interviews with the teacher were done on Fridays. While we had lunch together, I asked questions regarding what I observed and heard in the research setting to know more background information. Also, I asked relevant questions about her teaching practices. In addition, I asked the teacher about how my presence was influencing the classroom practice overall and about my

relationship with the participants. These reflexive informal interviews with the teacher were written in my research journal each week.

Additionally, informal interviews with the teachers occurred during morning preparation time or after school when the teacher and I had casual conversations. I clarified before starting the research project that our daily conversations were part of my data. During daily conversation with the classroom teacher, I learned information about the students' home families or previous relationships among peers that I could not have obtained through one semester of participant observation. For instance, I was able to perceive the continued conflict between So-jung and Yu-na differently after I heard the story of their previous relationship. Also, through informal interviews, I learned the teacher's responses to my tentative interpretations of girlhood in a classroom. As with the formal interviews with the teacher, the informal interviews were included in the research journal.

Research journal.

Contrary to the field notes from participant observation focusing on what I experienced in the research field, my research journal was a reflexive record about the process of doing this research (i.e., data-gathering and data-analyzing). All of the decisions that I made in the research setting for collecting data and the activities done as a researcher with the participants were recorded and evaluated in a critical manner, based on my research questions and theoretical perspectives. After I left the research setting and began writing, the research journal continued to reflect the process of data analysis.

Second, my positionality was documented in a research journal concentrating on how I got involved in the study as a person formed by my gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, morality, political orientation, emotions and desires, etc. Third, the way I treated the participants and the response of the participants to my presence in the research setting has been carefully evaluated through writing a research journal. Moreover, in a research journal, I carefully considered how the prescribed power imbalance between an adult and a child played out in my practices as a researcher in the research setting. Formal and informal interviews with the teacher regarding my relationship with the participants were recorded in the research journal later. Finally, formal and informal conversations with various people within/outside the research setting were also documented in the research journal.

Leaving the research setting

H Kindergarten started 2005's winter vacation in the third week of December. Although students had two more weeks of that semester after the winter vacation, I did not go back to the research setting. The decision to leave the research setting was made based on data saturation and practical matters. As data collection progressed, I noticed that the fresh data was similar to the previous data and included repeated incidents related to constructions of girlhood. I also considered the Korean school year that ends in February. Although students remained two weeks after the winter vacation, the remainder of the school year would be different from everyday practices because of preparation for graduation.

Ms. Jung and I set up a time for exchanging farewells. During the scheduled time, I showed one file of my typed field notes on the participants to the students. Then, I briefly reported the progress of data collection, the present progression, and the future plans. At that time, I reclarified to the students that I would conceal their identities by using pseudonyms. Students displayed an interest in the future process of my writing. After they were told that I would write a book in English, they asked me whether they would be given English pseudonyms in a written presentation.

Data analysis

Data analysis proceeded simultaneously and interactively with data collection (Glesne, 1999; Graue & Walsh, 1998; Miles & Hurberman, 1994). Formal data analysis began with expanding the raw data. From this, I searched, following Strauss and Corbin (1998), for codes and categories. Emerging codes and categories were continuously formulated by making comparisons. I examined the working categories to see if they were supported by data. In every step of the analysis, I wrote down memos about my "tentative analysis, thoughts, interpretations, questions and directions for further data collection" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 110).

This section describes the procedures of data analysis. I constructed the main themes of Korean girls' constructions of girlhood in a kindergarten class by following each step of data analysis shaped by Strauss and Corbin (1998): the coding of data, the making of categories, and the developing of themes. Because I worked differently analyzing the data, the procedure of data analysis can be divided into: in-research setting

data analysis and post-research setting data analysis. Before discussing each stage, I explain how Korean data can be translated into English and how audio-data can be transcribed.

Translation

As noted before, I recorded all of the participants' actions and interactions in Korean. Therefore, what I organized and analyzed needed to be translated. After data collection, I translated some units of Korean data for peer-debriefing with English readers. During the write up, I determined which units of data would be included in the final reports as excerpts. The selected units were translated by me and a Korean American undergraduate who was a fluent speaker of both Korean and English. We discussed which English word best carried the meaning of a Korean word before making a sentence. The first point of consideration in translation was to minimize the distortion of meanings in Korean data. The translated segment of data was read by an English speaker to see if it was understandable to an English speaker. The translated segment was later "back-translated" by Korean graduate students majoring in ECE. They read only our translations and then translated them back into Korean. The discrepancies between the original Korean data and back-translated Korean segments were ironed out by the Korean graduate students and me. If the English translations were thought to convey the meaning poorly, the process was repeated.

Transcription

Transcripts in this study are "naturalized transcriptions" (Bucholtz, 2000) in which "the process of transcription is made less visible through literacization, the privileging of written over oral discourse feature" (p. 1461). In other words, in making a transcription, I tried to produce "a smooth, apparently straightforward summary of the main ideas presented by the participants" (Miles & Hurberman, 1994, p. 51). The completed transcriptions were included in the electronically typed field notes from participant observations.

During the period of in-research setting data analysis, the audio-recorded data was mainly logged as I returned from the research setting everyday. In doing this, I made an initial transcription. After I completed data collection, I spent some time re-reading electronically typed data sets. While rereading data, I listened to the audio-data and made second-round transcriptions. After making the second round of transcriptions, I scarcely attempted to transcribe audio-data until the phase of writing. Actually, data analysis was done based on the polished field notes and second round completed transcriptions. While I concentrated on this writing, I selected certain segments of episodes or interviews that appropriately showed themes of Korean girls' construction of girlhood and made transcriptions with intense efforts in order to produce a transcript with a high level of accuracy.

In-Research Setting Data Analysis

In-research setting data analysis progressed with polishing raw data, organizing data, searching for codes, labeling codes, sorting out codes, and naming groups of codes. Every step of the data analysis in the research field alerted me to focus on certain aspects of participants' actions or interactions for my next session of fieldwork and to plan interviews with participants. Therefore, raw data was reorganized and typed as soon as I returned from the field. Though I'm describing in-research setting data analysis in a sequential order here, it did not happen that way. Rather, it occurred through a more iterative process.

Polishing and organizing data.

First, in polishing the original field notes from participant observation, I made as much effort as possible to recreate what I experienced in the research setting. In the polished field notes, every abbreviation and sketch in the written notes was fully verbalized for the next reading. The initial analytic notes were conceptualized through theoretical ideas, social issues, my experiences, and other incidents in the field (Emmerson, Frets, and Shaw, 1995). I typed the field notes using Microsoft Word.

Second, I listened to audio data after each daily participant observation. While I listened to audio data, I made a log instead of a complete transcription (Miles & Huberman, 1994, Graue & Walsh, 1998). The log of audio data included information regarding participants, centers, and topics with the first transcription amounting to about 30% of the recorded information. Also, as the topics of students' conversations changed,

I wrote down the counter numbers or running time of voice files for the next time I listened to them.

Third, I included informal and quasi-formal interviews with students in my participant observation field notes. I recorded the daily reflexive conversations with Ms. Jung in my research journal. The interviews with Ms. Jung were transcribed, word-processed, and kept in the research journal as soon as I returned from the field.

After I polished and organized each set of data, I added to my research journal analytic memos of temporary interpretations of participants' actions or interactions, the relationships among them, and suggestions for the next observation or interview (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Open coding.

As the method to analyze data in this study, I adopted open coding claimed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). They defined open coding as "the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered" (p. 101). I conceptualized the data by assigning labels to meaning embedded in units of data. Also, I became familiar with the written and expanded data by searching for codes and categories. In addition, coding transformed unmanageable amounts of data into readable and manageable sets of data.

Every week while in the research field, I completed the initial coding. For this, I divided all of the expanded data into several units that took into consideration changes of locale, of data collection, in the organization of participants, and in the topics of

participants' interactions and actions. Then, I highlighted words or phrases that seemed significant. In most cases, these words and phrases became the codes. Occasionally, I drew on literature or abstract ideas. The codes were written down in the margins of each page with the rational for naming them and comments for future fieldwork.

The initial coding happened weekly. As such I treated each week's data as one set, not as a part of a whole. In other words, I paid less attention to the continuity between the data set and the initial coding. Codes emerged in the later period of data collection that were similar to the initial ones. This can be explained by the repetitiveness of students' practices and the stability of my thinking in naming codes.

Post-Research Setting Data Analysis

The field work was continued until there was theory saturation, which means there was no more observation of new incidents related to the research topic (Glesne, 1999). When I came back from the research setting, I had four different sets of data (i.e., expanded field notes, a log of audiotapes, interview transcriptions, and a research journal) and an initial code list. Although data analysis was initiated from the research setting, I spent some time doing intensive data analysis upon my return.

Focused reading.

As the first step of intensive data analysis, I read written data line by line and made transcriptions of recorded data, with a specific focus on the research questions. I read written data in chronological order with other data sets collected on the same day, in

order to recreate a day in the field. In reading the data line by line, I focused on similarities in various parts of the data. Focused reading helped me to view written data as a whole. Also, I was able to recognize incidents of significance that failed to register with me in the field.

While studying the written data, I decided which parts of the audiotapes would be completely transcribed. The complete transcription is "a smooth, apparently straightforward summary of the main ideas presented by participants" (Miles & Hurberman, 1994, p. 51). The complete transcription was included in the expanded field notes. The research journal was revisited critically to retrieve the ideas and insights I had in the classroom, as well as to retrieve my early interpretations of connections among concepts.

Developing categories.

In doing intensive reading and making transcriptions, I revised the initial codes and wrote down the rationale for modifying the codes in the analytic memos. In modifying the initial coding, I searched for as many codes as possible, because doing so allowed me to identify which incidents were related to the research topic (Emmerson, Frets, & Shaw, 1995).

In order to categorize codes, I first made index cards with code names and information regarding the location of each code. Then I physically sorted out code index cards according to a comparison of similarities and differences among them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At first, I grouped codes with simple ideas in order to locate every code in

a certain pile of codes. As classification progressed, the underlying ideas were better articulated and made more specific. I continued to move codes across temporary groups or to split a group of codes. Each temporary category of codes was read to determine an appropriate name. The name of a category was selected from inclusive ideas of codes in that category, ideas drawn from literature, or in vivo codes.

After I named piles of codes, I made category files and moved the digitized data by using MS Word's cut and paste function. Information from the code index cards was word processed in cut and pasted data segments with analytic memos. My operating ideas in sorting out codes and naming categories were included in category files. Every tentative category system was developed through the same process of sorting out codes and naming groups of codes. The changes in my perspectives on the data and my reasons for revising codes and categories were thoroughly explained in the analytic memo. The combination and splitting of categories was continuous, until each code was properly placed.

Emergent themes.

The working categories were probed for "building up and elaborating themes" (Emmerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 160) through searching for properties—"the general or specific characteristic or attributes of a category" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 117) — and dimensions—"the location of a property along a continuum or range" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 117)—among codes in a category. To clarify the properties of each category, I carefully read every code and data segment in each category file. The clarified

properties and their dimensions were written in the analytic memo and added in a category file. In the process of clarifying properties and dimensions in a category, the working category system had been changed. As a consequence of comparison among codes and categories, I noticed variations and patterns from the data and envisioned possible ways of making a central theme.

Although I describe data analysis as a sequential process, it did not happen in a step-by-step way. The entire process was more complex and multidirectional. Every round of reading, coding, and categorizing, in fact, shed light on different parts of the data, and elicited new descriptions, analyses, and interpretations of the data. At the same time, every round of codes and categories led me to intensively focus on a certain part of the data. Throughout the entire process of analysis, the research questions and my conceptual framework guided me in taking each analytic step.

The data below is referred to with the following notations:

FN 0908200505: field notes from the page 5 of September 8, 2005

IT 10072005: interview transcript done in October 7

RJ 09292005: data taken from my research journal of September 29

Trustworthiness

Although with this research design I did not intend to generalize findings to other contexts, my study did attempt to meet the requirements of establishing trustworthiness (Lather, 1991). Therefore, I paid attention to fulfilling trustworthiness by employing various methods outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). They argue that, in qualitative

research, trustworthiness can be created by utilizing several methods: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and referential adequacy. I will depict how these strategies for establishing trustworthiness were reflected in the process of gathering data and analyzing data that I have outlined.

First, I stayed in the research field for a relatively prolonged period until data had reached theory saturation (Glesne, 1999). Lincoln and Guba (1985) require a researcher to be in the research context until she or he can appreciate strange social phenomena. However, an actual time limit cannot be ignored. During that time, I employed "persistent observation" (p. 304) for identifying the constructions of girlhood. That is, I concentrated on certain classroom members' talk and behaviors most relevant to the research topic. In this study, triangulation was done by the use of multiple data collection methods (field notes, interviews with participants, and my research journal) and different sources.

Next, I informally and formally discussed the entire process of this research project with peers (i.e., other graduate students, the teacher, and professors). Through these conversations, I obtained advice, fresh ideas, and all types of comments related to the research project from diverse perspectives. The conversations with peers provided me with chances to critically reflect on the procedure of data-collecting and data-analyzing, and to recognize any hidden issues or vague ideas embedded in the research project. Because this study has explored particularities and localities of Korean girls' girlhoods, the peer-debriefing process was significantly necessary. For instance, I shared my interpretation and analysis of the "princess syndrome" with Korean graduate students in

the ECE graduate program. Finally, for gathering adequate references, I relied on audio-tapes for preserving momentary phenomena.

In this research project, member checking was difficult because of the length of the data, which would be too long for young children, and time limits. As a substitute, I conducted informal reflexive interviews with the young participants in order to mutually negotiate and construct meanings. Also, I informally shared and discussed my tentative interpretation with the teacher and other peer members who had experience in this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

Girls' Constructions of Girlhood in Ms. Jung's Class

In this chapter, I delve into three constructions of girlhood that emerged during my observation of Korean girls in a kindergarten class. Before uncovering the girls' lived experiences that are constituted by and constitute the constructions of girlhood, I portray how these girlhoods came to take place in an institutional setting, emphasizing the institution's curriculum, guidelines, and teacher. I then go into detail about the three constructed girlhoods that emerged under these institutional conditions, namely: appearance-based girlish girlhoods, oppositional girlhoods, and heterosexual girlhoods. Because girls in this study construct and reconstruct girlhoods through persistent discussion, struggle, and even resistance, I respond to my two research questions in the same section. All of the names given are the girls' names unless otherwise noted.

This chapter is divided into four sections; the first describes how an institution participates in girls' constructions of girlhood while the last three concentrate on the girls themselves. The findings of this study indicate that the girls (re)construct girlhoods by producing and participating in peer culture (Corsaro, 1985; Corsaro & Molinary, 2006). [27] Within their peer culture, the girls jointly explore the possibilities of being a girl, resolve ambiguities about being a girl, and shape and share collective girlhoods. Moreover, by importing various ideas from the broader culture, the girls perform gender beyond the

[27] Corsaro (2004), in *Sociology of Childhood*, defines peer culture as "a stale set of activities or routines, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers" (P. 110).

scope of the curriculum. Though ideas drawn from pop culture are prevalent in the local girlhoods observed, the existing social structure of the local context restrains girls' practices. Observing Italian children's peer culture in primary schools, Corsaro and Molinary (2006) assert the need to discuss how "structural and institutional features constrain and enable the collective processes of interest" (p. 17). In this spirit, I discuss the possibilities and limitations caused by the local kindergarten in girls' constructions of three girlhoods. In addition, I expect this way of presenting the findings will allow readers to appreciate the independence of girls' lived experiences from the kindergarten and to enter into the local practices of young children with fewer distractions.

Girlhoods in a Kindergarten

A school is "a thoroughly gendered institution and plays an important role" (Swain, 2002, p. 57) in the formation of gendered identity among students (Eder, Evans, and Parker, 1995; Swain, 2002). Situated in an institution, students individually and collectively construct, negotiate, and reconstruct the normalized ways of being either a girl or a boy. This process is achieved through daily interactions with their peers, the hidden or explicit curriculum, and the school authorities—all within a context of competing and contradicting ideas of gender. Many studies have provided a significant body of knowledge in terms of the role of an institution in gender constructions of girls in primary or secondary schools (Eder, Evans & Parker, 1995; Kim, K. A., 2002; McRobbie, 2000; Renold, 2006). Only a few, however, examine early childhood institutions (MacNaughton, 2000; Oh, K, H., 2005; Robinson & Díaz, 2006; Skelton, 2000). This

may be due to the widely shared view that gender is irrelevant to young children. The *6th Edition of Korean National Curriculum for Kindergarten* (1998) does not specifically refer to gender. I think the invisibility of gender in the Korean national curriculum signifies the overall stance of the Korean ECE field on this topic.

In this section I illustrate how a Korean ECE institution can play a role in girls' constructions of girlhood. Following the social constructionist perspective, I conceptualize young children not as passive recipients and mimics (Blaise, 2005; Davies, 2003; MacNaughton, 2000; Thorne, 1993); rather, I view children as active agents in their own constructions of girlhood. MacNaughton (2000) recognizes that individuals and social institutions "do not just interact—instead [they] are interdependent and mutually constructive" (p. 24). Likewise, I conceptualize an institution not as a significant socializing force in shaping girlhoods.

Thus, I scrutinize the kindergarten, focusing especially on three aspects of the research setting: the significance of the roles played by the *6th Edition of Korean Curriculum for Kindergarten* (KMEHR, 1998), the institution's guidelines, and the teacher. In doing so, I mainly demonstrate how a particular kindergarten encourages or discourages certain ways of being a girl, and ultimately multiplies or complicates girls' practices. Similarly, my discussion aims to demonstrate how the fundamental principles of the Korean ECE field help shape the teacher's daily practices.

Many studies point out that a teacher plays a significant role, often in complex and contradictory ways, in a student's gender construction at school (Blaise, 2005; Dutro, 2002; Jones, 1996; Lee, J. O., 1999; MacNaughton, 2000; 1999; Thorne, 1993). Hence,

detailed descriptions of the classroom teacher are unavoidable in this section. Perceiving an individual teacher as the representation of ECE discipline, I investigate how ECE discipline directs an individual teacher to participate in girls' constructions of girlhoods. In *Rethinking Gender in Early Childhood*, MacNaughton (2000) examines individual early childhood teachers' practices and theories in terms of gender equity. But her intention is to show that "at every twist and turn, traditional early childhood discourses mitigate against gender equity" (p. 235). Following MacNaughton, I emphasize that at no point is it my intention to criticize the classroom teacher of the research setting. Despite clarifying my intention, I understand that this section may draw critical attention to the teacher or the kindergarten. In order to avoid such a result, I describe my participants in a decontextualized manner here, unlike the way I described them in the other sections.

Girls' Girlish Appearance in Kindergarten

Feminist scholars have often discussed students' gendered bodies in school with respect to gender identity construction (Martin, 1998; Oliver; 1999; Pillow, 2000; Swain, 2002). In a study to investigate the disciplinary function of a Korean secondary school, Kim, K. A. (2002) observed that the school serves to safeguard a norm of femininity—sexually modest girls—by regulating and controlling students' bodies. The school authorities performed appearance inspections to make sure that the girls were wearing appropriate undergarments. Compared to the bodies of older girls that were scrutinized and regulated in relation to sexualities, those of early childhood girls were mainly

discussed in relation to sensory skill and physical cognition, fundamental movement competence, and health and safety (KMEHR, 1998).

But the local kindergarten was more directly involved in girls' lived experiences as girlish girls. The institutional guidelines aimed to optimize students' performance and to police and control girls' bodies and bodily practices. I explain how two institutional guidelines—comfortable clothing and no personal belongings—complicated girls' lived practices. I then turn to how the teacher encouraged or discouraged girls' construction of a girlish appearance.

Skirts vs. pants: Institutional guidelines [28]

Most disciplinary guidelines in an ECE institution aim to produce docile bodies that function well as students (Jordan & Cowan, 1995; Martin, 1998). Accordingly, producing the appropriate indoor and outdoor behavior is often the primary issue. Compared to boys, girls were subjected relatively little to these types of guidelines in the research setting. Instead they were subject to a different type: "comfortable clothing" and "no personal belongings." The guidelines' intent is to assure students' full

[28] The guidelines at this school were referred to as the "promise." This reference to a rule as a promise is not an isolated incident. In fact, many Korean kindergartens seem to adopt the word "promise" instead of "rule." I interpret the use of "promise" instead of "rule" as being a reflection of the underlying philosophy of Korean kindergartens: perceiving young children as members of a community, not passive participants in a classroom. This philosophy is revealed more clearly when we look at the process of establishing a promise in a classroom. It evolves out of a classroom discussion of an issue, though the issue is brought forth primarily by the classroom authority figure. However, I think that the word "promise" disguises some of the institutional authority embedded in it. Therefore, I have intentionally chosen two words that cover both features: promise and rule.

participation in on-going curricular activities without being distracted by uncomfortable clothes, food, or personal accessories. For the purpose of producing docile student bodies, the two institutional guidelines regulate and restrict students' bodily practices. The way a Korean early childhood setting plays a role in students' gendered bodies through rules is reported in Oh, K. H.'s (2005) study. She describes how institutional rules that prohibit the dying of hair and that encourage kids to wear comfortable clothing affect their gender socialization.

Although girls are not the intentional target, these guidelines did impose more definite restrictions on their appearances and gender constructions than on boys. Data from participant observation obviously indicates that girls' lived practices were frequently regulated by the guidelines (FN 0921200504, RJ 11092005). At the same time, the girls also demonstrated a continuous negotiation of the guidelines. By imposing restrictions, this kindergarten interrupted and interfered with the girls' desires to be pretty girls who wear skirts and accessories.

First, the comfortable clothing guideline directly affected certain practices of the girls, particularly those who wore skirts. Several studies of girls in school raise the issue of girls' appearances being disturbed when they take part in curricular activities (Martin, 1998; Blaise, 2005; Thorne, 1993). To prevent girls' limited participation in physical activity, the kindergarten recommended through a weekly newsletter that parents dress children in comfortable clothes for P.E. or field trips. Aside from this, this kindergarten had no dress code. In addition to being an institutional guideline, the restriction was disseminated locally by the teacher who reminded students to wear "comfortable

clothing" on Fridays when physical activities are usually held. In doing so, she directed her attention specifically to the girls; "We are going to have a physical activity tomorrow. Girls! It would be more comfortable in pants than in skirts...come to school in pants" (FN 0901200524). When the guideline was applied to children's practices, the gender divide was exposed. Since girls' wearing skirts limited their participation in physical activities, the kindergarten encouraged the girls to wear pants. Emphasizing the girls' subject position as students over their status as girls, the local kindergarten regulated the girls' bodily practices.

Despite no further disciplinary action related to the wearing of comfortable clothing, the field notes from participant observations suggest that the guideline had a bearing on the girls' bodily practices. The girls' dominant appearance in pants on Fridays, from my perspective, was evidence of adherence to the guideline. In the spring semester of 2005, before I began my observation, the students had P.E. on Fridays (RJ09022005). Although this was no longer the case during my observation, most girls continued to dress as if Fridays were still P.E. days. Girls' wearing pants on Fridays did not simply proceed from the careful attention of an individual girl or her mother. Girls collectively retained the Friday appearance, reminding each other, "You have to come in pants tomorrow whether it's cold or not because we have P.E." (FN1201200517). That is, girls arrived at the appropriate practice on Friday together.

In addition to leading girls to carefully modify their appearance, in particular to wear skirts, the guideline of comfortable clothing seemed to be internalized as the criteria for evaluating whether the girls' appearance was appropriate or not. The girls in the

research setting demonstrated self-regulation of their appearance even without external pressure. A girl's growing stress and concern about her ivory dress exemplified this self-regulation. When Sei-young found out that the class was going to take an unexpected walk to a park near the kindergarten, she asked me, "Who else is wearing a skirt? Am I the only one?" (FN 1115200517). Suddenly, the ivory dress, which made her proud to be a pretty girl in the local setting, turned out to be an inappropriate practice. Contrary to other contexts, Sei-young evaluated her appearance in light of the internalized institutional guideline.

This guideline, which gave more value to the girls' subject position as students, increased the tensions involved in the girls' taking the pretty girl subject position. It conflicted with the girls' expression of femininity as pretty girls. In fact, the guideline made such expressions inappropriate in certain contexts (IT11172005). To resolve the conflict, the girls employed two strategies. Some carefully scheduled days to come in skirts: "I am coming to school in skirts, pants, skirts, pants in order" (FN1121200516), meaning she alternated between skirts and pants every other day. Others resolved to wear only pants: "I am always wearing pants because they are more comfortable" (FN1031200504). By adopting different strategies, the girls, in different ways, negotiated their appearance and modied their desire to wear skirts according to what the guideline permitted.

Aligning myself with Butler (1999) and Davies (2003), I interpret their negotiation of the appropriate appearance as not simply being related to a change in the girls' superficial appearance. In view of clothing being a "powerful signifier of

masculine and feminine ways of being" (Davies, 2003, p. 17), I see the girls' appearance negotiation as related to appropriate ways of being a girl in kindergarten. I argue that the institutional guideline of comfortable clothing acts to multiply and complicate the ways of being a girl in kindergarten. While encouraging the girls to be full participants in physical activities with fewer limitations, it quietly compels them to take a subject position as an active girl.

Second, the no personal belongings guideline also polices and controls girls' bodies and bodily practices. This school did not allow students to carry their personal belongings ranging from toys to food in order to lessen the possibility that they might distract students from on-going activities. Girls' accessories, compared to other belongings like toys, are controversial in terms of whether or not they are personal belongings. Accessories like barrettes, necklaces, rings, small purses, hair bands, and earrings are part of a girl's appearance (Thorne, 1993). Accordingly, girls' accessories were not simply prohibited in the local classroom. Thus, the girls could show off their personal belongings in the classroom in a way that boys could not. A boy like Young-su had to hide *Yu-Gi-Oh* cards in his pocket (FN 1027200514). The five musketeers—the boys in Group B called themselves the five musketeers—had to trade *Maple* cards at their "base," concealed from the teacher's gaze (FN1019200571).

Nonetheless, if a girl touched accessories and got distracted from an on-going activity, the teacher would limit the girl's possession of accessories by applying the no personal belongings guideline. Enforcement of the rule was usually promoted by the items becoming a distraction. This point came up when the teacher encouraged the girls

to leave their accessories alone before they went down to the auditorium for music: "If you want to take off your hair band or barrettes in the classroom, put them down now. If you continue to touch them [during the music activity], you will be distracted [in doing an activity]" (FN 1109200530). Despite her hypothetical way of giving directions, what she was saying was unquestionably clear. The girls also clearly recognized the point at which Ms. Jung would get involved: "If you do not touch it, it is O.K to wear accessories. She [Ms. Jung] will not take it." (IT10072005).

Unlike the guideline of comfortable clothing, the no personal belongings guideline directly involved the teacher. More direct and explicit body control was observed when the teacher enforced the guideline. Even though the girls knew when the guideline would be enforced (IT 10072005), the temptation to be absorbed in their belongings was sometimes too strong to resist. When an incident happened, the teacher held out an open hand and in one instance said: "Our promise is not to bring a ring to kindergarten. Yoon-su! Please, give the ring to me…I will return it to you when the day is over" (FN0921200504). Under the circumstances, while the girls didn't verbally strategize how to keep their belongings, a couple of them showed the good sense to deposit them in their bags—to be taken out again on the playground (FN 1115200517).

I have described the participation of the local early childhood institution in girls' constructions of girlhood through its guidelines, which mainly targets girls' bodies and bodily practices. Examination of the way in which the two guidelines were presented to the students clearly indicates the institutional intention to guide young children to properly perform their roles as students. To achieve this, the guidelines focus on

decreasing the probability that the students will be distracted by their clothing or personal belongings. Although they have only a vague relation to gender at the institutional level, their applications and the following practices appear to be gendered. When the teacher referred to the guideline in the research setting, its underlying gendered nature became apparent. Therefore, girls' everyday practices as girlish girls turned complex and were complicated by the institutional guidelines. From my perspective, the kindergarten discouraged the subject position of a pretty girl and encouraged the non-stereotypical subject position of an energetic girl or a properly performing female student.

You forgot your milk mustache.

The teacher rarely mentioned a girl's appearance in the research setting, in particular in terms of how pretty she was. This is inconsistent with the previous literature that discusses early childhood teachers' roles in the formation of gender stereotypes (Chick, Heilamn-Houser, & Hunter, 2002; Chung, H. S., Yang, A. K., & Kim, H. S., 1995; Kim, K. O., 2004). I witnessed the teacher mention a girl's appearance only a handful of times. This may have been due to her general concern about girls' increasing interest in their appearance. This is something she, unhappily, had observed in her own daughter. During a pre-data collection interview, the teacher informed me that, "All of sudden, my daughter started looking at herself in a mirror more often and longer than before. I wish I could remove that mirror" (RJ 08252005). I believe her concern was reflected in her careful choice of words. For instance, when Sung-woo came to the

classroom with a rabbit-shaped hat, she said, “We have a rabbit today” (FN1108200513). She simply described its appearance without any conscious appraisal of it.

In addition to the teacher’s indirect and implicit discouragement of girls’ ways of being girlish girls, she was active in arguing against the predominant idea of a pretty girl. She openly disagreed with girls who insisted that skirts were the appropriate look for a pretty girl on picture day. When Yoon-su normalized wearing skirts by contending that, “it [the look of wearing skirts] looks prettier and classier,” Mi-ra disputed her statement. She retorted, “we don’t need to wear skirts today.” The teacher sided with Mi-ra, remarking, “Well, I am wearing pants today” (FN 1103200528). The classroom authority expanded the narrow possibility of being a girl.

Despite her distant attitude toward girls’ pretty appearances, the teacher often encouraged well-groomed appearances for all students. In the research setting, the teacher emphasized a neat and tidy appearance. Occasionally, the teacher asked the students to look in a mirror to check for a “milk mustache” (FN 1010200531). After playground time, she also asked the students to remove dust or sand from their bodies and to wash their faces and hands (FN 1101200523). Students, mostly girls, in the local classroom voluntarily adopted the emphasis on neatness and tidiness; in fact they reminded their peers who left the snack table without wiping their mouths, “Hey. You forgot your milk mustache” (FN 0923200529). Sometimes, the classroom authority was directly engaged in girls’ bodily practices by giving them assistance. The girls would frequently fix their messy hair. Some were able to deal with falling pigtails and small barrettes. Others, however, still needed adult assistance (FN 1019200510). When a girl was not skilful at

fixing her hair, the teacher offered help. The teacher was thus led to participate in the girls' performance of femaleness as a well-groomed girl.

I have detailed that the teacher was critically aware of the girls' appearance-oriented behaviors, participated, consciously and unconsciously, in the girls' constructions of girlish girlhood, and encouraged the girls to be well-groomed. Unlike early childhood teachers in previous studies (Chick, Heilman-Houser, & Hunter 2002; Chung, H. S., Yang, A. K., & Kim, H. S., 1995; Kim, K. O., 2004), the teacher never let on that she might verbally value a girl's prettiness. Furthermore, the teacher refuted the young girls' generalization of traditional beauty being achieved by wearing skirts. However, a couple of sub-contents in the Korean national curriculum like cleanliness obliged the teacher to encourage the girls to take the subject position of well-groomed girls. Furthermore, the materials of the girls' appearance, such as small and difficult accessories, required the teacher to get involved in the process of polishing the girls' disheveled appearances. Data from participant observation and interviews with the teacher point out the complex and conflicting role performed by the teacher in the girls' constructions of girlish girlhood based on appearance.

Girls' Otherness in Kindergarten

At a glance, the Korean national curriculum appears to be irrelevant to local girls' gendered practices based on the gender binary. I would argue, however, that the Koran national curriculum implicitly endorses the gender binary by silencing its existence in young children's classroom lives. Moreover, the fundamental principle of the Korean

ECE field, child-centeredness, reinforces the gender binary by limiting an early childhood teacher to being an observer of children's gendered lives in her classroom. According to my field notes, this school does not activate the gender binary. This is demonstrated by the bi-weekly morning assembly. Every morning the class gathered in the auditorium. The faculty who led the morning assembly called students according to their ages, bus routes, or classes.[29]

Although the gender binary is often more salient in the classroom (Chung, H. S., Yang, A. K., & Kim, H. S., 1995; Thorne, 1993), it is not critically scrutinized. As mentioned above, the classroom teacher in upholding child-centeredness displays her reliance on individual differences as she interprets the girls' oppositional position. In this section, I illustrate how the local kindergarten bolsters and detracts from girls' oppositional girlhood construction. In doing so, I attempt to show how the dominant ECE principle, child-centeredness, solidifies girls' positioning as opposite from boys and makes the teacher innocently gender-blind.

"Girls of group A! Line up": Institutionalized gender separation.

The classroom authority occasionally grouped students according to binary gender categories as part of her classroom management strategies (Thorne, 1993). To secure a short transition time, for example, she divided the class by using gender categories or bus routes (Group A and Group B), or by combining the two. When the class went to the

[29] I think that the faculty's usages of language of calling students partially reflects features of the Korean language. Unlike English, Korean is not a language that specifies gender. Moreover, there is no expression such as "boys and girls."

playground, she sometimes called girls and boys instead of calling each individual student. “Girls of Group A! Please go get your jumpers and come back here.” (FN 1117200519). Even though she varied how she sent students to the playground–categorizing them according to colors, types or patterns of clothing—the results were relatively the same because of the students’ gendered appearances (RJ 10252005). For instance, when she called for students wearing clothes that have pictures of buildings, numbers, animal or floral patterns, or shiny and sparkling things (FN 1025200517) on them, children of only one gender usually stood to go line up. On the other hand, in order to prevent overcrowding at the snack table, she regularly asked girls and boys from each bus route to finish their snacks so the number of each group would be less than or the same as the number of chairs at the snack table: “I would like to ask the girls from Group B to have a snack first” (FN 1007200525).

These strategies for smooth transitions brought about the establishment of the gender binary in the research setting. Given the established gender binary, girls organized into clusters of girls in line or at the snack table. Thus, enacted categorization based on gender led in many cases to the emergence of girls-only or girls-dominant group organization. By utilizing gender as an official way to categorize students, the teacher, perhaps unintentionally, endorsed girls’ oppositional girlhood constructions. She repeatedly brought to the surface the gender binary submerged in the students’ daily practices.

At the same time, ironically, the teacher played the role of providing a context for mixed-gender interactions. The classroom authority even showed firm disagreement with

gender separation. Often she clearly—I would say intentionally—refused students' efforts to divide themselves into groups of girls and boys and to limit others based on gender (FN 0905200505). When Ji-sung (boy), while sitting, exclaimed at a snack table where there are four boys with two girls, "This is a boys' table," the classroom authority gently cross-examined him: "There are two girls. Why is this table for boys?" She said later in an informal reflexive conversation that she refuted Ji-sung's declaration "because what he said might limit the girls who sat in the table" (RJ09052005). She clarified that her stance in interrupting Ji-sung was grounded on individual rights. From my observation, as long as students did not publicize gender separation or attempt to control others' lived experience based on gender, the teacher remained ambivalent as to how students sat or paired up.

I noticed activation of the gender binary in classroom management strategies to modify students' behaviors. The teacher rewarded exemplary behavior rather than chastising students' misbehavior. In order to make a student keep the classroom guidelines, the teacher often highlighted girls' good behavior to boys. By comparing students' behaviors based on gender, the teacher subtly introduced an atmosphere of competition between girls and boys. For instance, when she sent the girls to the playground, she called the boys' attention to the girls' manner of walking: "The girls are all walking, not running. Can you do that?" (FN 0912200507). Such a strategy foregrounds the gender binary by highlighting girls' who perform the traditional types of girlhood as good students (Francis, 1998; Walkerdine, 1990). In fact, when the girls heard her remarks about their good walking, they displayed even more model-like walking.

Other than the cases described above, the teacher did not kindle competition between the girls and boys. She never compared girls to boys with respect to skill or knowledge. Even while students were doing curricular activities with clear outcomes of victory or defeat, the girls in the research setting rarely competed against the boys. The teacher made no clear division of gender when organizing games. She usually made up two teams based on the bus routes. When a boy suggested dividing the class into teams of girls and boys, the teacher refused, justifying herself by saying that the teams "need girls and boys evenly" (FN 1125200509).

Throughout data collection, the teacher was consciously and unconsciously involved in her students' constructions of oppositional girlhood within the gender binary. Despite not letting the students activate the gender binary and publicize their separation, she inadvertently legitimized dichotomized gender in some of her pedagogical practices. Her classroom management strategies made the gender boundary more salient and created a space in which the girls solidified their oppositional girlhoods. Calling students by gender to save time produced girls-only groups or clusters of girls. Her indirect way of disciplining students also highlighted gender in a competitive manner. Moreover, in using this classroom management strategy, she participated in the constructions of gender stereotypes by frequently emphasizing girls' good behaviors.

"Why do you think that girls don't like firefighter play?": Child-centeredness

The 6th Edition of Korean National Curriculum for Kindergarten (1998) verifies its characteristic as "a child centered curriculum which promotes the development of

autonomy and creativity of children." Grounded in the Korean national curriculum, the kindergarten perceives children's interests as its top priority in students' learning and development. In the local setting, classroom discussion and indoor free-choice activity are achieved by enabling students to pursue their own interests. Giving authority to young children over their learning and development, the classroom teacher generally takes a role that "support[s] children's exploration and experimentation" (MacNaughton, 2000, p. 47). Unless a student controls or interrupts other students, the teacher in the research setting assumes a supportive role. In other words, the teacher is barely concerned with what students do, where students are, and with whom students play. In spite of child-centeredness' contribution to regard young children as autonomous learners, child-centeredness allows them to reproduce stereotypical ways of being either a girl or a boy (Alloway, 1995; MacNaughton, 2000; Walkerdine, 1990). Furthermore, it forces an individual teacher to appreciate students' practices from an individual interest or preference and, ultimately, to ignore the gendered meanings embedded in students' practices. Child-centeredness prevents an individual teacher's action from creating more equitable gender practices.

"Girls' habitual silence" (RJ11182005) during classroom discussion is one example of how the teacher understands girls' practices from the standpoint of individuality. In many cases, the gendered patterns of students' participation remained invisible. Throughout the data collection, girls repeatedly displayed passivity in the classroom. When I indicated this to the teacher in a weekly reflexive interview, she explained, "Well, I think that a map [the on-going classroom discussion theme] might not

be interesting for girls. That's why girls participated in discussions less than boys. But if they are interested in a theme, it is different" (RJ 11252005). Based on the gendered preferences of young children, the teacher said each gender group demonstrated different levels of participation according to the theme.

In addition, the teacher posited that girls were learning despite their silence: "Even though they [girls] are silent during classroom discussion, I don't think that they are not learning" (RJ11152005). From her point of view, active participation in classroom discussion was not the only way to learn new ideas or thoughts. Silent girls also developed their ideas or knowledge by listening to other students. The teacher's standpoint hindered her from recognizing and correcting the ways that girls erase themselves from public space by "taking the safe road" (Gallas, 1997, p). I believe that the teacher who prioritizes an individual's interest as the dominant cause of one's behavior is too optimistic about girls' habitual silence. In this circumstance, the asymmetrical power in the classroom discussion contexts remained.

Child-centeredness also intervened in the gaze of the classroom authority figure upon girls' practices in indoor free-choice activity. The local girls repeatedly made gendered choices of the language, art, and book centers for indoor free-choice activity time. Some girls acknowledged block and science centers as being for boys. Considering the significance of indoor free-choice activities in children's learning and development, it could be said that the young girls' learning was constrained by their oppositional girlhood constructions. Nevertheless, in an institutional context in which performing a supportive role is valorized, active engagement in children's choices would be an inappropriate

possibility for early childhood teachers. The classroom authority's practices demonstrated her distance from her students' stereotypical choices.

Nevertheless, the classroom authority figure interrupted girls' attempts to *publicly* separate themselves from boys. Many previous studies done by Korean scholars actually address this point (Chung, H., Yang, A. & Kim, H., 1995; Yoo, J. E. & Kim, J. O., 2003). The following example shows how the teacher exercised her pedagogical power to thwart such attempts. When it was time to decide on a theme for the dramatic center, the classroom authority figure asked which theme the students wanted. Several ideas were suggested: one was firefighter play. Hearing of it, Jun-hee commented, "Girls don't like firefighter play." The teacher promptly asked: "Why do you think girls don't like firefighter play? I wonder if that is your idea or not. . . Have you ever asked the other girls whether they like firefighter play or not?" (FN0929200523). She asked every girl whether she liked firefighter play so that each could be heard. Every girl supported Jun-hee. Nonetheless, the classroom authority figure's disagreement and effort to search for different opinions showed her endorsement of the possibility of having interests, preferences, desires, and ways of being a girl *other* than those of Jun-hee. Later the classroom authority figure accounted for her involvement from a perspective of individuality—"There might be other girls who have different ideas than Jun-hee" (RJ 09303005). I maintain that such efforts by the classroom authority figure bring about a productive complication of the locally constructed girlhoods.

I have investigated the inconsistency in the classroom authority figure's participation in girls' oppositional girlhood construction in classroom discussions and

indoor free-choice activities. Focusing on the current critique of child-centeredness, I can present the following interpretation. Trained for over twenty years to uphold the tenet of child-centeredness, the classroom authority figure has built a focused vision of young children's practices congruent to developmentalism. That is, she saw girls' limited participation in classroom discussion and certain areas of indoor free choice activity through the lens of individuals' interests. Hence, gender was obscured clean from her view of young children. Because of this, the classroom authority figure implicitly supported and directly participated in girls' oppositional girlhood constructions that occurred in significant activities. When students activated the gender dichotomy in a more overt way, the teacher participated in students' oppositional gender construction. However, her power was limited by child-centeredness during classroom discussion and indoor free-choice activity.

Although previous studies notice this inconsistency in early childhood teachers' practices (Chung, H., Yang, A. & Kim, H., 1995; Yoo, J. E. & Kim, J. O., 2003), they do not fully explain the reason. I believe that this is because those studies concentrate on an individual teacher. Aligning myself with the reconceptualization of the dominant ECE (Cannella, 1997; MacNaughton, 2000), I move the analytic focus from an individual teacher to the underlying principle of ECE: child-centeredness. As the dominant and fundamental principle in organizing early childhood practices, child-centeredness has been criticized for sidelining a teacher or even making her/him an accomplice to young children's gendered classroom experiences (MacNaughton, 2000). Even when early childhood teachers recognize children's gendered practices in a classroom, they are

hampered in taking action because they are dominated by the institutionalized way of performing their roles as assistants or supporters.

This section has detailed how the kindergarten contributed to girls' constructions of oppositional girlhood by activating and/or resisting the gender dichotomy in the research setting. First, classroom management strategies adopted by the classroom authority figure activated the gender dichotomy and seemed to solidify girls' positioning as opposite to boys. Second, the findings of this study indicate that child-centeredness functions to promote girls' gendered practices in classroom discussion and indoor free-choice activity. Restricted by the fundamental principle of the Korean ECE field, the classroom authority appreciated the girls' gendered practices from the viewpoint of individuality. As a result, the gendered power relations that informed girls' silence in classroom discussions and distance from certain centers went unnoticed by the classroom authority figure. As MacNaughton (2000) addresses, child-centeredness obscures the critical lens of the classroom authority figure. By defining the valuable, desirable, and right way to perform the role of an early childhood teacher as the role of assistant or supporter, child-centeredness engenders an inconsistency in the teacher's practice in terms of cultivating more gender equitable practices in an early childhood setting.

Brides and Grooms: Heteronormativity in an Early Childhood Institution

The majority of literature in the ECE field seems to insufficiently account for the heteronormative practices in an early childhood setting. The deep-seated disassociation in ECE of sexuality in young children has already been studied by Robinson & Díaz (2006), Silin (1995), Tobin (2000), and Walkerdine (1990). It is unquestionably noticed in a

couple of Korean studies on anti-bias curricula (Lee, J. O, 1992; Lee, H. S. 2000). These scholars regard sexuality as an inappropriate topic for young children. Similarly, Robinson and Díaz (2006) mention that the current ECE, which has seriously considered social justice in its practices, does not fully integrate sexuality. According to Robinson and Díaz, the developmental perspective of young children constructs the image of them as asexual, immature, and innocent, and directs ECE practices to be suitable for the constructed image of children. However, as far as my observation went, heteronormativity was prevalent in the research setting. This section illustrates the implicit and explicit involvement of the school in girls' heteronormative girlhoods. First, I discuss the promotion of heteronormativity by the Korean national curriculum and educational materials that promote the heteronormative family. Then I elaborate on how the teacher in this particular research project created a safe and tolerant dialogic community in the research setting.

Wedding as play: Promotion of heteronotmativity.

Heteronormativity was circulated in the research setting by a variety of cultural texts provided by students as well as by the teacher. In permitting the consumption of a wide range of pop culture texts such as movies, dramas, and Korean pop songs, supposedly genderless early childhood settings turned out to be heterosexist settings. Educational materials selected by the classroom teacher also contributed to a suffusion of heterosexuality in the classroom. The following lyrics of "Wedding of Birds" from the

teacher's collection of sing-along songs include references to heterosexual romance/love and marriage in a wedding ceremony:

> In a green forest, there is a wedding of birds.
> Di-Di-Ra-Ra-Ra Di-Di-Ra-Ra-Ra.
> Di-Di-Ra-Ra-Ra. Ra-Ra-Ra. Ra-Ra-Ra-Ra.
> A woodpecker, a groom, marches and a skylark, a bride, march. (*repeat)*
> (FN 0929200505)

Enthusiastic singing filled the research setting three or four times a day. The teacher played the piano during most transitional times when students took care of their physical needs and then gathered at a block center. As the songs deal mostly with seasons, on-going themes, or various aspects of childhood, most of them were passed over after a couple weeks. However, "Wedding of Birds" kept up throughout data collection. Short and simple, the song's melody and rhythm were amusing to sing and listen to.

Whenever the teacher started playing this song on the piano, several girls started dancing in their seats. While they were singing the refrain, girls paired up and play patty–cake with one another. This moment was filled with pleasure. As an observer and former teacher, I can attest to the fact that this song was good for arousing interest in a classroom. The "Wedding of Birds" explicitly promotes and reinforces heterosexuality by joyfully depicting a scene from a traditional wedding ceremony in the local setting.

Like the "Wedding of Birds", many educational materials used in the Korean ECE field appear to value a heteronormative family (Won, S. H., 2002; Yang, S. B., 1993). In general, educational materials by emphasizing man-woman marriages circulate heteronormativity and endorse a certain way of being a female—a mother who devotes herself to family. Institutionalization of the heteronormative family is also found in the

analysis of stories for children included in the teacher guide materials for the 5th and 6th editions of the Korean national curricula (Won, S. H., 2002). According to Won, S. H., female characters in stories are described as housewives in relation to family love. Put another way, the Korean national curriculum perpetuates heteronormativity and its correlated femininity and masculinity. From the perspective of Robinson & Díaz (2006), the Korean national curriculum directs young children toward the correct position within compulsory heterosexuality. In terms of "failing to question and interrogate heterosexuality as a form of sexism" (Blaise, 2005), the Korean national curriculum could be interpreted as a heterosexist text in that it legitimizes heteronormative practices.

"It is not as difficult as it used to be": Creating a dialogic classroom community.

Though heteronormativity has continuously circulated in the research setting through educational materials, the teacher created what MacNaughton (2000) calls a "dialogic classroom community" (p. 124) in which students discussed other ways of being outside of compulsory heterosexuality. The following vignette demonstrates the dialogic classroom community that led to the expansion and diversification of girlhoods in the local setting. One of the most thrilling days in the research setting was when the class discussed homosexual relationships. The classroom discussion began with students' questions. (FN1019200524)

The teacher introduces a daily schedule for students.

1. Min-ju: Then, who is your husband?
2. Young-su: A man.
3. Ji-sung: Of course, he is a man.
4. Sung-jin: What is his name?

5. Yu-na: Why?
6. Ji-sung: 'Cause, a man and a woman get married
7. Jae-hoon: No. A man and a man or a woman and woman can marry each other in some countries.
8. Ms. Jung: That's right.
9. Jae-hoon: Ms. Jung! In some countries, a man can marry a man.
10. Ms. Jung: Right. Some men love men. Some women love women. (FN 1019200524)

The initial question reflects some students' belief that heterosexual marriage in Korean society is *the* social arrangement between two people in a long term romantic relationship. However, one boy immediately problemetized this belief by bringing up homosexual marriage. Showing no reservations, the teacher followed the boy's lead. After being backed up by the classroom teacher, the boy reiterated his declaration. Because the teacher appeared supportive, his second proclamation was more public. Instead of giving him a short confirmation, the teacher rephrased his statement, changing "marry" to "love." Her different choice of words may reflect her distance from the topic as an individual, even as it demonstrates her respect for her differences as a teacher.

The boy and the teacher, by broaching the idea of homosexual marriage, widened the scope of classroom discussion regarding marriage. Within the dialogic classroom community, many other students brought ideas and questions about ways of living outside heterosexuality. One student asked: "Ms. Jung! If a woman marries another woman, then wouldn't they have two girl babies? Are they going to have two babies?" After exploding with laughter, the teacher corrects her, reminding students of the fact that there must be an egg and a sperm. The teacher continued, "Well, they [a pair of females] love each other and live together. But they cannot have a baby because they do not have

sperm. So if they decide to have a baby, they look for a person to donate his sperm to them." This exchange led to a discussion about artificial insemination.

The teacher, clearly, did not shy away from the issue of homosexuality if and when it came up. Rather, she incorporated it into the class discussion and established the dialogic classroom community in which the students could freely explore different ways of being a girl or a boy. It was fascinating to watch the 5- and 6-year-olds and their teacher discuss the invisible, silenced, and marginalized way of being in Korean society. Later, the teacher and I talked informally about her practice (RJ10192005). I asked if homosexual marriage—traditionally regarded as taboo in a kindergarten classroom—was difficult to talk about with young children. "It is not as difficult as it used to be. They [difficult topics] always change as time goes by. These days, for me, the topic of North Korea is kind of difficult to talk about." Then, she spoke of her responsibility as a teacher in discussing difficult topics with students, ". . . Regardless of what I personally think, it is not right to create prejudices in the students." Her comments are a testament to a fundamental principle in dealing with risky and tricky topics like homosexuality: to prioritize "respect for the difference" (Robinson & Díaz, 2006) in her teaching.

Here I highlight the dialogic classroom community created in the local setting. As MacNaughton states, the girls experience a "hybridization in which two or more understandings join to form something new" (p. 124). By bringing up homosexual marriage for classroom discussion, the teacher complicated heteronormative girlhoods. Her practice demonstrates the significant role of a teacher in young children's gender construction. Although young children are situated in a context in which numerous ways

of being a girl exist, not every single way of being a girl is accessible to them. The normalized way of being a girl in a broader culture consistently regulates girls to position themselves within a certain narrow range of possibilities. Given the circumstances, an individual teacher can gender a dialogic classroom community in which invisible, unheard, and marginalized possibilities of being a girl become visible, heard, and centered for young girls.

Also, I think that this particular classroom discussion shows the potential of child-centeredness to expand the locally constructed girlhood. In the previous section, I vigorously detailed how the fundamental principle of ECE, child-centeredness, conforms to the oppositional girlhoods. It sets up the institutional environment and hinders the teacher from engaging with girls who take oppositional positions. Nonetheless, child-centeredness operates in the opposite way above. It adds complexities to girls' constructions of heteronormative girlhood. Because of child centeredness the teacher was able to respond to a student's question and to incorporate a student's interest into classroom practices.

During recent decades, Korean society has expanded in terms of discussing sexuality (Lee, S. H., 2002). Since 1995, invisible ways of being have become visible in many social contexts, particularly in pop culture contexts. Young children as members of Korean society have also interacted with cultural texts that embrace a wide range of sexualities. In my preliminary study, young children even discussed the possibility of surgical gender reassignment. Korean young children read and interpret other possibilities of living outside heteronormativity. They draw on those possibilities in a classroom and

explore them. As a result, early childhood teachers also participate in discussions of sexuality with young children. Even though the dominant ECE field argues for the inappropriateness of discussing sexuality, classroom practices sometimes deviate from what is seen as appropriate by the powers that be. While the ECE field has taken a "hands-off" attitude toward topics like homosexual marriage, an individual teacher must be ready to negotiate such topics because young children will bring them to the classroom.

Summary

I have detailed how the local kindergarten encouraged and/or discouraged the local girlhood. In doing so, I examined three aspects of the local kindergarten: the curriculum, the institutional guidelines, and the teacher. First, the Korean national curriculum looked irrelevant to the locally constructed girlhood. Thus the curriculum was barely mentioned in relation to the three dominant girlhoods in the local kindergarten. From my perspective, the distance of the Korean national curriculum from gender states that the mainstream Korean field regards gender as a minor or subordinate issue to children's (intellectual) learning. In spite of its distant attitude toward gender, the Korean national curriculum was involved in girls' gendered practices in a subtle way. The national curriculum conformed to the local girlhood. Especially, child-centeredness, one pedagogical foundation of the Korean national curriculum, resulted in the girls' (re)activation of the gender binary during the indoor free-choice activity. In other words, the Korean national curriculum indirectly cultivated the peer-culture in which the girls relatively freely explored a wide range of possibilities of being a girl.

Second, the local kindergarten explicitly participated in girls' constructions of girlhood through institutional guidelines that mostly aim to encourage students to perform very well. Originally, the two guidelines of "comfortable clothing" and "no personal belongings" were not referred to in relation to gender. However, as they were applied to girls' practices, they became gendered and frequently applied to the girls. Especially, the guidelines generated tensions in the girls' practices as girlish girls by limiting wearing skirts and accessories. Put another way, the kindergarten interrupted and interfered with girls' practices of wearing skirts and accessories—emphasizing their status as "students." The tensions caused by the institutional guidelines complicated young girls' gender performance in the local setting.

Finally, the teacher's practices participated in girls' constructions of girlhood in ways that were conflicting and contradictory (Chung, H., Yang, A. & Kim, H., 1995; Yoo, J. E. & K. J. O., 2003). I believe that the inconsistent involvement of the teacher in the girls' daily practices created tensions between her critical consciousnesses about the gendered practices of young girls and her disciplinary knowledge regarding the right way to perform a teacher's role. As a result, the teacher demonstrated a limited exercise of her pedagogical power over the girls' gendered practices. However, the findings clearly indicate the multiplication and diversification of the local girlhoods caused by the teacher's active involvement in the girls' practices.

I have explained the institutional context in which girls construct and are constructed by the girlish girlhood, oppositional girlhood, and heteronormative girlhood. Findings suggest that various aspects of the research setting inconsistently operated on

the girls' discursive constructions of girlhoods. The institutional guidelines and the teacher complicated the girls' lived practices. While there were links to the institutional pedagogy, policy, structure, and personnel, the girls also freely explored numerous possibilities for being a girl in their peer-culture. They searched for meanings of being a girl by drawing on more adult-like ideas then they may have been expected to find strictly in their peer-culture. As a result, the constructed girlhoods went beyond the institution's assumptions. Recognizing their subversive and independent practices, I closely examine the local girlhood usually observed just within their peer-culture in the following sections.

Girls' Constructions of Appearance-Based Girlish Girlhood

From her very first day in the world a girl's appearance becomes gendered through a wide range of gendered materials (Lamb & Brown, 2006). Any ambiguity about a child's gender is usually buried beneath a myriad of gender-signifying materials. The Korean 5-and 6-year-old girls in this research project successfully maintained their gendered, or specifically feminized, appearance through a great variety of commercialized gender-signifying items. Girls in the research setting talked about, observed, and evaluated their own and/or other girls' bodies and bodily practices. In doing so, their individual practices became shared and communal practices. Also, the girls discursively negotiated the appropriateness of each others' appearances in light of outward imperatives. Keeping a balance between the way of being a girlish girl and the pressure socially, culturally, and institutionally that is imposed upon a kindergarten girl,

the girls regulated and limited their bodies and bodily practices. However, there are some who resist the socially and culturally dominant female image.

The appearance of children, in general, has received limited attention. It is no exaggeration to say that the ECE field is only interested in whether children's bodies are maturing properly or functioning properly to do activities. This tendency is easily noticed in the authorized texts fundamental to the daily practices of ECE such as the *6th Edition of Korean National Curriculum for Kindergarten* (2000) and *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* (Bredekamp & Copple 1997).

Recently, contrary to the mainstream ECE field, some feminist scholars—Blaise (2005), Davies (2003), and Martin (1998)—have initiated a discussion of children's bodies and/or bodily practices from the perspective of gender constructions. Guided by the recent discussion, I identify an emergent construction of girlhood from girls' bodies and bodily practices: girls' constructions of girlish girlhood. In order to analyze and interpret this construction of girlhood, I rely on Butler 's (1999) theorization of gender. Butler, in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* acknowledges gender as ". . . manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body" (p. xv). Butler details the process of becoming a gendered body through performative acts like movement, gesture, styles, and demeanors endowed within a heterosexual matrix. Conceptualizing gender as performativity, Butler demystifies a natural body as a genesis of naturalization and neutralization of sex, sexuality, and gender.

[30] In addition, Butler states that the body is a "signifying practice" (p. 177) through which gender is constructed and sustained, not "signified by an inscription from a cultural source figured as 'external' to body" (p. 164).

Recognizing the significance of bodies and bodily practices for gender (Butler, 1999; Connell, 1995; Davies, 2003; Lamb & Brown, 2006), I look at Korean girls' constructions of girlish girlhood on/through their appearances in the research setting. Here, girls' appearances are not limited to what I observed; rather, as Renold (2000) did, I include girls' negotiation and conversation related to their bodies and bodily practices. I begin with a description of gendered elements that signify gender. Then, I illustrate three specific subject positions performed through a certain set of appearances, demeanors, and actions. A pretty girl, a well-groomed girl, and a properly-covered girl, are detailed in order. Following this is girls' negotiation of appropriate appearance in a kindergarten. Particularly, I explore "princess syndrome," a sarcastic label for hyper-femininity in Korean culture. This section closes with a discussion of girls' resistance to the dominant image of a female body, a slim body.

Before further discussion, I should make two points. First, notwithstanding the visibility of girls' body and bodily practice (Renold, 2000), my attention to them results from distant observation at the initial period of data collection. At that time, I relied heavily on visual information, such as the girls' ways of moving, standing, sitting, walking, wearing, and adorning. My initial interest in girls' bodies, in fact, led me to

[30] Performativity, as the idea that identity does not prefigure action but is constituted through action, discourses or the words we speak and behave, is not limited to the doing of gender. David, Coffey, Connolly, Nayak, and Reay (2006) assert Butler's performativity is "a fully fledged theory of subjectivity" (p. 422).

continuously respond to girls' talk about bodily practices and relevant incidents even after I entered their social world. Next, I must admit that my own way of performing gender on/though my body in the research setting was noticed by the girls. In other words, I unintentionally caused fashion/beauty talk more than once. Despite my efforts to dress plainly, the two piercings in my left ear were noticed and discussed by the girls (RJ 11182005). They also talked about what was not performed through my body—for instance, I wore no necklace (FN 0906200515) and few skirts (FN 1013200505).

Dying for Pink: Girls' Feminized Bodies

The body of a girl becomes gendered by commercialized materials that can hardly be overlooked or misinterpreted by others (Blaise, 2005; Davies, 2003; Martin, 1998). Although the girls enjoyed a broad range of appearances, they shied away from crossing the boundary of conventional feminine appearances. As studies of preadolescent or adolescent girls indicate (Lamb & Brown, 2006; Lees, 1993; McRobbie, 2000; Oliver, 1999; Renold, 2000), feminine looks were central to the local girls' appearance. In Ms. Jung's class the elements that make girls' bodies gendered were stereotypically gendered colors (pastel-toned colors or pink), adorning details (ribbon, lace, and embroidery), and numerous accessories such as barrettes, rings, necklaces, etc. In this section, I elaborate on how girls' bodies were gendered and feminized through these three elements.

Girls are dying for pink.

> Pink is the final touch to complete girls' looks. Sometimes, it is so salient that it covers a girls' body entirely. Other times it can be overlooked

> because it makes a subtle appearance in girls' clothing: at the edge of frills, small ribbons on socks, hems of pants, etc. However, it eloquently speaks to whether this body belongs to a girl or a boy. Today, only two girls are in the no pink zone. (RJ0909200501)

Pink in girls' attire or adornments, signifying "a strong 'girlie' aesthetic" (Russell & Tyler, 2002, p. 627), was a frequent element of girlish girlhoods in Ms. Jung's class. A similar predominance of pink on girls' bodies was reported in previous studies of young girls (Blaise, 2005; Kim, J. Sa., 2003; Lamb & Brown, 2006; Martin, 1998; Russell & Tyler, 2002; Park, S. Ya., 2001). At a glance, in Ms. Jung's class, nearly all colors were shared among girls and boys. Notwithstanding their frequent crossing-over of the gendered color boundary, their bodies were usually located within the spectrum of pink as described above. In other words, unlike blue, pink still functions as "a sexual color coding" (Paoletti, 1987, p.).

The girls not only loved to wear pink, but, from my observation, preferred it to all else (Lamb & Brown, 2006). For instance, while at the snack table many girls would often rummage through a container of forks in order to find a pink one; they were eventually directed by Ms. Jung to simply grab one (FN1004200517). Girls' appropriation of pink was noticed and remarked on by Min-ho (boy), "Girls are dying for pink" (FN1014200507). His speculation was partly admitted and partly invalidated by several girls who say that pink is not their single favorite color: "I... I have two favorite colors. One is blue and the other is pink" (IT 10182005). Some of them even claimed to prefer blue Cart Riders over pink or red ones (FN 1020200535). [31]

[31] Cart Rider is the title of an internet computer game, which is a racing game. This game is available in Internet sites tailored for young children.

Also true of pink is that it was the only color monopolized by these girls. This may have been reinforced by the boys' implicit and explicit low regard of pink. The boys seldom if ever selected anything pink. For instance, only two boys ever wore pink polo shirts (FN0905200503) and not one ever chose a pink fork. Moreover, some boys openly made fun of pink umbrellas and pink Hello Kitty (FN 0930200521).

Girls in the local setting perform and were performed by girlish girlhood by locating their bodies in pink territory. In spite of the variations among girls in terms of how much pink they wore, they nearly claimed the ownership of this color. Considering a Korean culture in which pink merchandise is dominantly, almost exclusively, offered to girls, I think that pink is not simply a color. It is the color for girls and, also, the cultural symbol of girlishness. Hence, the local girls' obsession with pink suggests their own reading and interpreting of its cultural and symbolic meaning in the broader culture. As well, girls' "dying for pink" is an extension of their efforts to construct gender in a socially and culturally dominant way.

Heart and lace: Feminizing details.

Clothing is an "essential part of the process through which girls learn the meaning of being" (Davies, 2003, p. 15). Furthermore, Davies declares that girls address their positions within the range of femininities through gender-appropriate appearance (Blaise, 2005; Davies, 2003). From Davies' standpoint, I can argue that girls in the local setting displayed a wide range of femininities through various styles of clothing. Aside from a couple of girls, like Hae-in's "extremely childish and girlie style" (RJ09132005), most

girls moved freely among styles. From overalls (FN 1027200501) to holster-neck blouses (FN 0831200502), a variety of attire was worn.

I perceived that the girls' wide range of styles in the local setting was possible in part because H Kindergarten did not have a uniform policy. Although the institution did not strictly supervise how students dress, it did to some extent influence students' appearance through its "comfortable clothing" guideline.

Many girls wore pants more frequently than skirts in the research setting. In accordance with Butler's theory, the girls performed more active girlhood through a material that allowed them to easily and freely move their bodies. However, girls in athletic pants or denim pants still presented their girlishness (RJ 0913200506). Small adornments on girls' clothing distinguished them from boys'. Consequently, even with an active, a somehow boyish, look, girls still managed to create a feminine appearance:

> At a glance, Sung-woo, in a pastel-toned sky-blue T-shirt with round neck, indigo cotton pants, a denim jacket and sneakers, looks slightly boyish. However, her overall unisex look does not make her seem like a boy due to several feminine decorations. Her shirt is embroidered with yellow, red, and blue floral and butterfly shapes. Her neck is also finished with matching-colored knitted lace. In addition, Sung-woo has placed her ring with a heart ornament on her right index finger. Little tiny ribbons on her socks are also the same color as her shirt.
> (FN 0923200528)

Through her pants and simple denim jacket, Sung-woo expressed the more energetic and active girlishness on/through her body. However, her look did not create a masculine or unisex body. Her pastel shirt with feminine details reduced the boyish look of a plain denim jacket and indigo cotton pants. The details clearly feminized the unisex style. Denim pants frequently worn in Ms. Jung's class, and regarded as a representative item

of unisex style, were particularly decorated. Decorations included a flower-shaped badge right above the pockets, low-rise flares (called "girls' pants" by So-jung (FN0920200503)), frilled edges on hems or side seams (FN 1004200504), a spangle appliqué reading "REAL GIRL" (FN1122200514), and a beaded chain with artificial pink pearls (FN11032005).

Free of school uniforms, the girls presented themselves as girlish girls through various styles. Regardless of girls' wearing of non-stereotypical items, their bodies were always feminized by adorning details such as ribbons, lace, embroidery, and flower- or heart-shaped decorations. In the local setting, they might play and frolic with no chance of being mistaken for boys.

Hair bands and jewelry: Accessories.

Finally, but straightforwardly, the appearances of the girls became gendered with items like hair accessories, bracelets, rings, or necklaces (Martin, 1998), and cosmetics (lip glitter and nail polish) (FN 1115200517). Particularly when girls were dressed casually, accessories functioned to remove any gender ambiguity that might remain. This is explained by the fact that the majority of accessories for young children are extremely feminized in terms of colors, shapes, and functions. It is no exaggeration to say that accessories are worn exclusively by girls. Unlike in adult culture, where males commonly decorate themselves with accessories, only two boys wore necklaces throughout observation (FN0906200515). Since necklaces with inscriptions of emergency numbers

to prevent missing children are common, boys who wore necklaces were not discriminated against by other students.

Accessories also functioned as conversation pieces for fashion/beauty talk in the research setting. Girls chatted about nail polish (FN1005200520), rings (FN0927200509), and barrettes (FN1021200501) with artificial orange-colored hair attached; these daily conversations among girls were "informative regarding the current fashion trends" of early childhood girls (RJ09212005). Because the markets aggressively promoted certain items at certain times, the girls were familiar with similar fashion items. Therefore, newly arrived fashion items in toy shops, school supply shops, and retail stores like Wal-Mart, were often the subject of fashion/beauty talk. For instance, many girls came to class with the same ring; according to So-jung, one particular ring was sold with a set of nail polish (FN 0912200507). Girls who possessed the same ring shared their individual practices regarding where they bought it, what colors of nail polish they had, and their favorite color of nail polish. Through the beauty/fashion talk, the girls' shared experiences became the communal girlhood. Girls even organized a day of bringing the shared item to the class and playing together. In fact, several girls promised to wear their rings together as a symbol of their membership in a clique (FN09232005).

Wearing the accessories caused the girls to experience either negative or positive attention from other girls:

> Hae-in steps into a classroom with other newly arrived bus riders. She puts on a new hair band decorated with rabbit ear shapes. After hanging her coat in the hall, she stands in front of a body-size mirror and assesses her appearance for a few seconds. Then she turns around and comes to a book center. Min-ju and Su-hyun in a book center notice Hae-in's new hair band. Min-ju looks at Hae-in's new hair band with admiration. "What a pretty

> rabbit!" Other girls at the book center appraise Hae-in's brand new accessory.
> (FN 1128200508)

Her new hair band with rabbit ears was acquired, according to Hae-in, after continual pleading with her parents. The hair band's frame was wrapped in white shiny and sleek ribbon tape. Rabbit ears were attached to it and lined with white artificial rabbit fur. It was accented with pink heart-shaped plastic ornaments with silver edges. Excepting Min-ju, all the girls betrayed an active interest in Hae-in's new hair band. Some of them, according to Hae-in, touched and commented on how pretty it was. Hae-in responded in a friendly way to the positive comments and behavior from the other girls. She seemed to enjoy the attention. A unique and pretty belonging elicits favorable attention from the other girls, and even occasionally from Ms. Jung or Ms. Shin. Being the center of attention was enjoyable for any of the girls.

Nevertheless, wearing accessories was occasionally problematized among the girls. Some girls of Ms. Jung's class attempted to control and limit other girls' bodies and bodily practices by relying on the institutional guideline of no personal belongings. Sei-young was negative about Soo-jin's wearing pearl earrings, "You cannot come to the class with earrings. That is the promise" (FN 1021200514). Compared to Ms. Jung's enactment of the no personal belonging guideline, based on some girls' failures to perform as students (FN0831300517), I think that some girls strategically drew on the guideline to manipulate other girls' practices.

I described how 5-and 6-year-old girls' appearances became gendered, focusing on gendered colors, feminizing details, and accessories. The three elements were found in

numerous gender-signifying items adopted by the girls. Because most gender-signifying items are promoted by the market, I feel strongly about the need to consider how the market affects girls' constructions of girlhood. This is, in fact, profoundly accounted for by Lamb and Brown (2006). Shining a light on commercialized girlhood in American culture, they assert that the market does not simply make profits by selling certain types of items to young girls. Rather, according to the authors, it also promotes certain types of characteristics, qualities, and labels for girls that are strongly associated with the stereotypes of girls as girly, cute, sweet, innocent, and soft. Viewed from this standpoint, young girls continuously read and listen to the messages regarding the desirable image of a girl embedded in countless gender-signifying items. Despite my agreement with the role of the market in girlhood constructions, I do not imply here girls' are passively reading and listening to commercialized messages. Rather, conceptualizing girls as active agents in their everyday lives, I interpret girls' gendered bodies in the local setting as the embodiment of vigorous negotiation and careful modification of their bodies.

A Pretty Girl, a Well-groomed Girl, and a Properly-Covered Girl.

Three types of girlish appearances were frequently visible and negotiated in Ms. Jung's class: a pretty girl, a well-groomed gril, and a properly-covered girl. In this section, I examine how the three types of girlish appearances were constructed and negotiated by the girls. I see the three types of girls' appearances not as exclusive to each other, but rather as intertwined and interrelated with each other. They are related in particular to the girls' practices of wearing skirts. The three types of girlish appearance are not merely

validated among the girls as the more desirable appearances but are made imperative. Some girls in the three appearances exercised power over deviant girls. In the following section, my focus is not is not in describing outward appearances. Rather, I attempt to spotlight the girls' daily conversations and behaviors, the effect of which is to construct each subtype of girlish appearance.

> *It makes you prettier and luxurious: A pretty girl.*
>
> Ms. Jung's class is sitting at a block center for discussion. Sei-young, sitting next to Young-jun (boy), starts gathering her hair from her shoulder with both hands. Sei-young gathers her hair near her left ear as if to tie it and turns towards me:
>
> 1. Sei-young: Does this look prettier?
>
> After asking the question, Sei-young lets her hair drop and smoothes it neatly behind her shoulder
>
> 2. Sei-young: Does this look prettier? Or (with both hands pulling her hair behind her head into a ponytail) does this look prettier? Would this like Pipi Longstocking be prettier? (*dividing her hair into both hands and pulling them slightly above her ears*)
> 3. Jaehui: (startled and at a loss for words)
> 4. Sei-young: Huh? Which looks prettier? (*bending her upper body to Jaehui and urging an answer with PiPi in Long stocking*)
> 5. Jaehui: Well, when I was little I usually had my hair in pigtails but I haven't tried pulling it all to one side. I didn't try that kind of hair when I was little.
> 6. Sei-young: Tying your hair to one side (*gathering her hair to the side and turns to show me*) It is popular right now. Is this pretty? (*asking Young-jun who is sitting beside her*) I will come to school with this style tomorrow
> (FN0913200520).

In the above vignette, Sei-young, one of the fashion-conscious girls in Ms. Jung's class, performed her girlishness through her appearance, behaviors, and attitudes. First of all,

her long hair obviously signaled her gender. Next, she gathered her long hair into a tress, which seemed to present her girlishness and ruled out any chance of her being mistaken for a boy. (I did not observe the same behavior from a boy with medium-length hair in the research setting.) Finally, Sei-young was constructed by and constructed her girlish girlhood as a pretty girl by seeking validation about her appearance from others, an adult female and a boy in whom she was romantically interested—her relationship with Young-jun will be detailed in the later section.

Being a pretty girl is a major theme penetrating the locally constructed girlhood that directly regulates and controls girls' bodies and bodily practices. Similarly, Oh, K. H. (2005) and Park, S. Ya. (2001) investigated Korean early childhood girls' attention to physical attractiveness in institutional settings. Like Sei-young, the girls experimented with various tips and trends of body adornment using a variety of commercial products. Girls' efforts at beautifying themselves were sometimes rewarded and endorsed by their peers (evidenced on page 189). Occasionally, an adult in the local classroom encouraged a girl's construction of a pretty girl.

Girls of Ms. Jung's class regarded wearing skirts as cardinal to making a body pretty. Skirts have "acquired a specific, localized, symbolic value" (Swain, 2002, p. 61) in the girls' practices as pretty girls. They valorized wearing a skirt as a nonnegotiable element of the pretty look with long hair (IT12192005). In particular, a frilly "princess-like dress" (FN1024200526), which exaggeratedly represents feminine beauty, was referred to as more desirable than any other type of clothing. Through wearing skirts frequently or expressing a longing for a princess-like dress, the girls constructed

girlhoods in which prettiness discursively operates. This particular cultural symbol was exclusively owned by the girls. On picture day at H kindergarten, Yoon-su clarified skirts as being essential to a pretty look (FN1103200525):

> Most girls of Ms. Jung's class appear in special attire and elaborate hair styles. Special dress up is not exclusive to girls: some boys wear blazers and ties. Whenever a student enters the classroom, some girls appraise the newly arrived and comment on him or her. Some of them even count the number of girls in skirts or boys in blazers and ties. Yoon-su, a connoisseur at the reading center, gives an account for the similar looks:
>
> 1.Yoon-su: Do you know why the girls are wearing skirts?
> 2. Jaehui: No, why are they wearing skirts?
> 3. Yoon-su: Because we're taking graduation pictures today. That's why girls are wearing skirts.
> 4. Jae-hui: Do you have to wear a skirt when you're taking your graduation picture?
> 5. Yoon-su: Yes.
> 6. Jae-hui: But why a skirt?
> 7. Yoon-su: Because it makes you prettier and luxurious. (FN1103200525)

Yoon-su here illustrated her strict aesthetic values for females, wearing skirts, as well as her endorsement of other girls' bodily practices in skirts. Noticing the prevalence of girls in skirts, Yoon-su, in a pleated skirt, accounted for why. According to Yoon-su, a skirt was the right decision for a special event like taking a picture because it made a girl "pretty and luxurious." Through articulating what kind of look was made by wearing skirts, Yoon-su described her and other girls' practices of wearing skirts as pretty and luxurious.[32] From my perspective, Yoon-su here specified her position as a pretty and

[32] Due to my exclusive interest in gender, I have few incidents that point out the intersection between gender and class. Her use of "luxurious," from my perspective, would be one of the incidents. Although gender should not be related to other aspects of subjectivities, it might also be out of the scope of the current study.

luxurious girl among various femininities. Considering the frequent usage of "luxurious" in describing a certain type of female appearance in a broader Korea, Yoon-su seemed to illustrate her construction of girlhood by interacting with the dominant ideas of being a female from the broader society.

A conceptualization of wearing skirts similar to Yoon-su's was noticed in a quasi-formal interview with some girls (IT 11172005). Many other girls valued "wearing skirts" as imperative to being a pretty girl as they do "putting on make-up." Responding to my question, "So, you cannot look pretty if you are in pants?" Su-hyun, Min-ju, Sung-woo, Hae-in and Yu-na, firmly insisted on the impossibility of being pretty without skirts (IT 11172005).

However, the pretty girl was not completed simply by wearing a skirt. She needed "a princess-like dress" or "a wedding gown-like dress" (IT11172005). When asked to draw a picture of a pretty person, the girls came up with a pretty girl in a certain type of dress similar to a ballgown (IT12052005). So-jung helped me visualize what the girls call a princess-like dress by describing it as "a dress for *Del-le-ri*," which is similar to a flower girl in a wedding ceremony (FN 10242005). The following vignette puts on display a girl's desire for a princess-like dress to become a pretty girl for a birthday party. With a clear understanding of the subtleties distinguishing between femininities performed by a plain skirt and a princess-like dress, Soo-jin revealed her concern about her relatively simple appearance:

> Soo-jin approaches an art table and stands next to me. She puts her arms around my shoulder.
>
> 1. Jae-hui: (*looking at her*) What's up?

2. Soo-jin: Nothing. (*pause*) Just, I have to look pretty. It's because it's Minb-soo's (*a boy in a different class*) birthday. But I have to look prettier because then he will be the only one who looks nice.
……..
3. Jae-hui: Why do you have to look pretty at a birthday party?
4. Soo-jin: Um, Min-soo, Min-soo has to look nice, too. Because he's going to look nice and we have to write cards, and everything has to be very pretty. Or else, it's bad. But if I want to play, I have to be comfortable, too.
5. Jae-hui: You have to look pretty because it's a party?
6. Soo-jin: Yes. Yes.
7. Jae-hui: What kind of clothes do you have to wear to look pretty?
8. Soo-jin: Well, skirts. I am wearing a skirt now. I want to wear a skirt, something like a prince-like dress, and look nice
9. Jae-hui: Well, Don't you have a dress on now?
10. Soo-jin: Nope.
11. Jae-hui: You want something like a prince-like dress rather than what you're wearing now?
12. Soo-jin: Yes. But I only have pajamas to wear at home. I only have pretty pajamas. I don't have any dresses to wear outside.
(FN 1117200516)

Soo-jin, concerned about her birthday party appearance, was dressed in an olive-colored corduroy skirt with two-layer frilled edges and a matching striped T-shirt. She claimed that she was not pretty enough to go to a birthday party. Soo-jin even argued that being pretty is her obligation—". . . everything has to be very pretty. Or else, it's bad." Moreover, she illustrated that she perceived being pretty not as an aesthetically satisfactory condition, but as a matter of right or wrong. Although she justified me in her plain skirt as a good choice for having fun, she did not hide her desire for a princess-like dress. For Soo-jin, a princess-like dress simply must be worn to be pretty.

Being a pretty girl was not just for self satisfaction. According to Soo-jin, it was a girls' responsibility. Also, it was obviously a more desirable status for girls as many studies have indicated. Many studies note the positive influence of children's physical

attractiveness on interpersonal relationships (References). Shin, J. S. (1995) observes that Korean girls who are regarded as attractive by adults have favorable experiences in peer relations. The girls in the local classroom were clearly aware of the more favorable attention paid to a pretty girl and talked about it: “People are nicer and kinder to me when I look pretty” (IT12162005). Some had enjoyed it themselves inside and outside kindergarten. As described earlier, a girl received complimentary attention from her peers due to her pretty appearance. Especially, a girl’s new accessory was an attention-getter. By complimenting one another, the girls supported other girls’ practices as pretty girls and participated in the communal construction of pretty girls.

Girls evaluated themselves in terms of prettiness through external gazes. Soo-jin critically scrutinized her own appearance based on a girl’s stereotypical prettiness. Also, many girls vigorously sought approval of their appearance from peers or adults (FN1101200523). Some of them seemed to be restricted by the heterosexual gaze as reported in several relevant studies of Western preadolescent or adolescent girls (Adler & Adler, 1998; Eder, Evans, and Parker, 1995; McRobbie, 2000; Renold, 2000). One girl in the research setting identified the reason for being pretty in relation to heterosexual relationships by saying, “People who are going out make themselves pretty” (IT12162005). Sei-young on page 192 also showed signs of being controlled by the heterosexual gaze. By asking Young-jun (regarded as her boyfriend among other students) whether her hair style was pretty or not, Sei-young implicitly displayed her need for his validation. Furthermore, if sexiness and slimness are included in prettiness, the heterosexual gaze becomes even more visible in the local setting. Being sexy, either

through physical attractiveness or a through a sexy movement was valued by the girls because males like sexiness and, moreover, what males like is good (FN1024200545).

Girls' taking a subject position as pretty girls was explored above. The relevant findings indicate that the girls' investment of themselves as being pretty girls was because it was a more desirable subject position for them. Contrary to their daily variations in appearance, the girls validated a narrow image that reflects the traditional feminine aesthetic: a girl with long hair in a princess-like dress. The girls, relying on external gazes including the heterosexual gaze, tended to evaluate and negotiate the locally established image of a pretty girl. As some have already felt firsthand, being a pretty girl elevated one to a higher status and into the center of others' favorable attention. However, the girls' constructions as pretty girls have always been the subject of negotiation in the research setting. In consideration of appropriateness for lives in a kindergarten, wearing skirts, especially a princess-like dress, was sometimes negotiated. Soo-jin directly demonstrated her negotiation of the tension between her two subject positions as a pretty girl and an active and playful child.

> *Princess Tips: A well-groomed girl.*
>
> "Princess Tips: Be perfectly polished in every way" is printed in English on Su-yeon's yellowish green pants. Beneath this strong and powerful message, Ariel the Little Mermaid, one of the adored princesses from the Disney Kingdom, is buried in thought, cupping her chin with her hands and fluttering her long eyelashes.
> (FN 0830200505)

Every girl in Ms. Jung's class was polished in terms of appearance as recommended by Ariel. The refined body or bodily practices such as neat and tidy attire, brushed hair, and

a washed face are likely to be “a passport into a classroom” (RJ 09292005) for the girls. Even when the girls are late from oversleeping, there was no evidence of a morning battle having been waged (FN 0926200403).

Nevertheless, in a kindergarten where hands-on experiences and physical activities were encouraged, there were countless ways to ruin a pretty appearance. Under the circumstances, the girls needed to put in effort to remove undesirable marks from incidents that had in some way blemished their beautiful bodies as girls, just like the junior high school girls of Eder, Evans, and Parker’s study (1995). During my observation, the girls scarcely had an unmanageable situation; nothing required a change of outfit. The girls usually directed their efforts towards fixing messy hair. While washing their hands in the restroom after playground time or physical activity, the girls watched themselves in the mirror and arranged their hair with wet hands or redid barrettes or hair bands. Therefore, a girl might emerge from the restroom with a new sleek, wet-looking style, as if she had used hair gel (FN 0912200515). Their scrutiny of their looks and their efforts to restore a morning look frequently forced them to spend a long time in front of a full-sized mirror. Standing in front of a mirror and turning from right to left, a girl ensured that her look was perfectly polished (FN0906200501). Not just before a mirror, girls also watched their reflections in a one-way mirror or in windows next to the block center (FN 0920200502).

Girls of Ms. Jung’s class organized their collective practices as well-groomed girls by letting other girls know what restoration needed to be done. Even if a girl did not recognize her messy hair, her friends would point it out (FN 118200538). Adult members

in the research setting also contributed to the girls' well-groomed bodies (FN1004200526).

In addition to restorative behaviors, girls in Ms. Jung's class took precautions to maintain a polished look. Girls' preventive behaviors obviously brought control and regulation of their bodies and ways of sitting and moving. Girls in skirts did a ritualized movement to protect their looks when they sat on the ground, caring about whether the hems of their skirts was dragging (FN1024200506). They pulled down and put the back of a skirt between their thighs and calves when they sat. This behavior also saved them from inadvertently exposing their panties to others. A similar behavior was repeated when girls sat on chairs in order to prevent wrinkles on the backs of skirts.

The Girls' performance of a well-groomed girl on/through body or bodily practice sometimes intervened with their participation as a student in curricular activities (Blaise, 2005). When a girl anticipated possibly ruining her appearance, she sat out of the classroom activities.

> The class of Ms. Jung goes to the vegetable garden, located on the right side of the building, to harvest Chinese cabbage. Everyone lines up and waits for their turn to enter the garden in front of a gate. In the middle of line, So-jung looks down and says with a sigh.
>
> 1. So-jung: Oh, no. I knew it. I shouldn't have worn boots.
> 2. Jaehui: Why shouldn't you have worn your boots?
> 3. So-jung: These? These new ones? These are new boots. So it won't come off.
> 4. Jaehui: Are they hard to erase?
> 5. So-jung: It's not going to come off even you die (*desperately*). And stains are blurred.
>
> Her brand new boots are pink, suede, calf-high, Ugg-style. They are accented with brown sewing machine stitches.
> (FN 1121200514)

So-jung talked about her concern with her new pink boots. She worried about whether she would stain her boots and if she could erase those stains. Moreover, based on her knowledge of suede, she feared she would not be able to restore her appearance because the stains would be smudged instead of removed. The tension between her subject position as a well-groomed girl and as a kindergartner prompted So-jung's negotiation. As the result of daily cautious behaviors and efforts to maintain a well-groomed appearance, girls of Ms. Jung's class were able to go back home without dirty wet socks, dusty clothes, and disheveled, messy hair.

A girlish appearance demanded attention to one's look. Furthermore, the institutional context in which the girls were encouraged to actively explore the world around them challenged the girls' construction of girlish girlhood. Dealing with complexities and contradictions, the girls took a position as well-groomed girls. In order to sustain their polished morning appearances, the girls frequently examined themselves and their ways of moving, running, and sitting. In managing the tension between being a kindergartner and being a pretty girl, the girls were constructed and constructed themselves as well-groomed girls. Along with their efforts to preserve their ideal appearance, some girls were less than enthusiastic toward physical activities that might jeopardize this appearance. That is, girls in these types of institutional settings were occasionally disempowered by their girlish appearances. In other words, the girls could be held hostage by their girlish appearances.

Sok-ba-ji (inner pants): A properly-covered girl.

So-jung, Jun-hee, Hyun-sung (boy) and Jae-won (boy) are standing around a pavilion. I am sitting on a pavilion observing them.

1. Jun-hee: Hey let's play chicken legs.
2. So-jung: (*leaning over a pillar of the pavilion*) I'm wearing a skirt so I can't.
3. Jae-won: (*sitting next to me*) Hey it's a chicken fight.
4. Hyun-sung: I cannot hop on one leg

Jae-won aims a fist at me.

6. Jae-hui: What?
7. Jae-won: You
8. Jae-hui: (*with embarrassed smile*) Me?
9. Jae-won: (*watching me and then to Hyun-sung*) Hold your leg.

Jae-won and Hyun-sung start their "chicken fight" before an audience of So-jung, Jun-hee, and me.
(FN 0908200505)

This vignette demonstrates that girls in skirts are limited in their participation in physical activities (Blaise, 2005; Martin, 1998; Park, S. Ya. 2001; Thorne, 1993). Despite being physically able and willing to take part in physical activities, So-jung and I, in skirts, didn't participate in the "chicken fight." The field notes describe So-jung's organizing and leading a physical activity on the playground. Chicken fighting is a game in which one opponent attempts to knock down another opponent by bumping her/him. Each player crosses an ankle on the thigh of the other leg and holds the ankle with both hands. Because of this posture, if a player is wearing a skirt there is an embarrassing possibility of exposing one's panties. Aware of such possibilities, So-jung and I were not able to accept Jun-hee and Jae-won's challenge. The potential for embarrassment made So-jung and I accept the passive role of audience members. Later that day, So-jung made clear her

refusal to chicken fight, saying “I don’t like showing underwear to others. It is shameful.” (FN0908200538). Even if So-jung and I were to win in the game, we clearly recognized that as no compensation for the embarrassment we risked.

Girls’ reserved attitudes in skirts are reported in studies of young girls across cultures (Blaise, 2005; Thorne, 1993). Skirts set limits on the girls’ bodies. In order to avoid exposing their underwear, the girls avoid certain types of behaviors. Self-regulatory behaviors to cover underwear are repeated in girls’ daily practices. Davies (2003) points out the regulation of bodies through a gender-signifying item: “. . . dresses mark the girlishness of their wearers but they also act as part of the process whereby girlishness becomes inscribed in girls’ bodies” (p. 15). By repeatedly doing self-regulatory behaviors, the girls performed as properly-covered girls. As discussed before, girls in skirts were careful to tuck the hem between back sides of calves and thighs. When the girls sat on the carpet with crossed legs or on a chair, they carefully managed their skirts. Soo-jin told me, looking at me in the eye as she pulled down a raised hem of her skirt to her knees and spread her skirt over her crossed legs, “Mom told me to sit after doing this. If I don’t … it is embarrassing” (FN1121200506). Several girls in Ms. Jung’s class repeated similar stories to me in informal interviews.

The girls’ practices and answers would indicate that the discipline of girls’ bodies sprang from the idea of covering underwear and, by extension, protecting sexuality (Kim, K. A. 2002). The boys’ discipline, on the other hand, came at the hands of institutional discipline, which compels “indoor” behavior (Jones, 1996; Jordan & Cowan, 1995; Martin, 1998). Also, the gendered discipline, the covering of underwear, was usually

maintained while among other females, be their mothers or peers. The discipline maintained among mothers was noticed in the girls' answers to informal questions about their mothers' instructions on how to sit while wearing skirts. The field notes include incidents of girls' collective constructions of themselves as properly-covered girls. Girls in Ms. Jung's class even exercised power over other girls through the idea of properly covering themselves. Having internalized the idea of keeping their underwear covered, the girls policed each other (Blaise, 2005) and disciplined each another in gendered ways (Martin, 1998). The girls acted to facilitate other girls' conformist practices by devaluing, criticizing, and marginalizing inappropriate practices. The following vignette shows such policing, which happened rarely in Ms. Jung's class:

> Sung-woo, standing in the middle of a line to go to the playground, puts her left leg on a handrail, which is higher than her waist. Yu-jung says to Sung-woo, in an exaggerated tone, "How shameful you are," and directs her gaze to Sung-woo's pants, "I am not." Jun-hee, front of You-jin, turns to Sung-woo and admonishes, "Hey, your panties are showing." Sung-woo immediately puts her leg back on the ground and grumbles, "There is nothing to be embarrassed about."
> (FN 0905200506).

My field notes include only two instances of girls failing to conceal their underwear and consequently being chastised by other girls as above. Interestingly, I did not notice a boy drawing attention to any such female lapses in judgment. In both cases, girls, on the other hand, interfered with other girls' ways of sitting and positioning if they did not properly cover their underwear. The sudden awareness of exposing one's underwear made a poor girl crouch rapidly, squeezing her legs together and pressing down her skirt (FN1027200501). Through policing each other, the girls in the research setting collectively constructed themselves as properly-covered girls.

The girls' taking positions as well-groomed girls was also observed in their wearing a different article of clothing. Most girls in the research setting covered their underwear properly with *Sok-ba-ji*, inner pants. This garment, which girls wore between their underwear and skirts, permitted more physical freedom for the girls in the research setting. With no concern of embarrassment about their underwear being seen, girls had nearly full access to the playground and its equipment. These were similar to the long ago bloomers of American culture. Sometimes they wore shorts instead of inner pants (FN 1018200534). Some girls put on pink inner pants with frills (FN0830200502).

As the weather got colder, the girls put skirts on less often and inner pants were seldom seen. Thick pantyhose [or 'tights'] to keep the legs warm didn't need to be covered by inner pants. Sei-young, a fashion expert, explained when and why a girl wears inner pants.

> Sei-young, You-jin and I sit at a table watching Min-ju and Young-jun's game. Sei-young and You-jin, while they watch the game, talk about their stockings.
>
> 1. Jae-hui: I would like to ask you a question, is that okay?
> 2. You-jin: Okay what is it?
> 3. Jae-hui: Why do you wear pants under your skirt?
> 4. Sei-young: What? Inner pants?
> 5. Jaehu-hui: Yes.
> 6. You-jin: I'm not wearing inner pants now.
> 7. Sei-young: But if you only wear underwear and you're wearing a skirt when you play and then your skirt goes up then everyone can see your underwear.
> 8. Jae-hui: O.K. Well. . . (*to You-jin*) Yoo-jin, you're not wearing any under-shorts? You said that you do not have inner pants on now.
> 9. You-jin: 'Cause I am wearing stockings.
> 10. Sei-young: If you wear knee high stockings, you have to wear under-shorts over your underwear. But if you wear stockings like this it's okay because you're wearing stockings over your underwear.

Soo-lim, You-jin and Min-ju loudly exclaim “Yes”

12. Jaehui: Why is it wrong?
13. You-jin: It's embarrassing, of course.

You-jin and Su-yeon look each at others with giggles

14. Sei-young: If it’s okay to show your underwear, why don’t you show it to us. You won’t show us your underwear. We’re embarrassed, too.
15. Jae-hui: (*pause*)
16. Sei-young: You cannot show your panties. We are the same.
(FN 1118200517).

Here Sei-young clarified when and why a girl need to wear inner pants. Contrary to You-jin and Min-ju who seemed to be unable to articulate the reasons for wearing inner pants, Sei-young notably explained the need for inner pants. The three girls, You-jin, Min-ju, and Sei-young, expressed their discomfort at the idea of exposing their underwear to others by exclaiming the inappropriateness of it. My question, meant to tap the possibility of freeing the girls’ bodies from being concealed from others’ gazes, was strongly rejected by Sei-young’s counterattack. Sei-young closed the discussion by testing my willingness to defy how a female body should be presented in public. I believe that Sei-young exercised power over me by indicating the common ground in which she and I had been regulated by the idea of covering underwear, in spite of a three decade age gap.

Girls’ practice of wearing inner pants had obviously increased from when I was a kindergarten teacher six and seven years ago. In a reflexive interview (RJ11032005), Ms. Jung explaind the reasons for the recent increase of girls’ wearing inner pants in relation to an awareness of “hygiene.” As Ms. Jung said, the particularity of a kindergarten setting—a half hour playground time and sitting on floor or carpet—encourages girls to wear inner pants. Korean literature, however, offers a different perspective on this

practice. Wearing additional garments under skirts is also reported in Kim, K. A's (2002) study on Korean adolescent girls. For Korean adolescent girls, wearing a bottom-covering garment comes from the institutional discipline enacted through girls' appearance inspection by female school authorities. Kim, K. A. (2002) insists that the school regulates and controls girls' sexuality through legitimizing appropriately covered bodies of girls and, furthermore, sexually modest girls.

While I accept that there is a connection between wearing inner pants and hygiene/heath issues, I cannot ignore its other function: to conceal female sexuality. In a society in which female sexuality has been oppressed and denied, exposing one's underwear is not simply an embarrassing incident for a girl; rather, it is a serious violation of the endorsed and validated way of being a girl. From this perspective, Jun-hee and You-jin on page 204 indicated Sung-woo's violation of what she was supposed to be. Also, as Sei-young's reaction suggests, my attempt to question the girls' practices of covering underwear was interpreted by Sei-young as challenging her way of being a girl.

Although wearing inner pants is strongly related to the stereotypical idea of protecting and covering female bodies from others' gazes, inner pants also empower girls to move beyond the limitations imposed by wearing skirts. Despite the reserved attitudes of the girls' in skirts, I can say that they were not divorced from physical activities. Aside from soccer, the girls participated fully in nearly every physical activity, even when wearing skirts. This observation is different from previous studies that exhibit girls' reservations on the playground (Martin, 1998; Thorn, 1993). The inconsistency of my

observation from previous studies can be explained by the context of H Kindergarten. Much of the literature mainly discusses girls' reserved attitude on the playground based on what they show on the monkey bars. This high-risk (in respect to exposing underwear) equipment does not exist at H Kindergarten. I thus may have had fewer chances to discern girls' distance from physical activities. Additionally and more significantly, the bottom-covering layer of clothing worn among girls is another reason for girls' inconsistency with the lived practices in the existing literature.

To sum up, keeping underwear from others' gaze was the collective endeavor for girls in the local setting. Wearing skirts permitted girls' subject position as pretty girls, but at the same time, restricted their performance as modest girls by requiring them to ritualize and inscribe feminine behaviors upon their bodies. However, the limitations that come with wearing a skirt were often overcome by adding a bottom-covering garment. The girls performed their girlishness as pretty girls in skirts, but simultaneously resisted the way of being a girl restricted by skirts such as being passive, reserved, and modest. As properly-covered girls with inner pants, girls in the local setting had nearly full access to physical activities on the playground.

Girls' Negotiation of Appropriate Appearance

The girls in Ms. Jung's class discursively negotiated the appropriate appearance for 5-and 6-year old girls by responding to the institutional and social expectations imposed on them. As described earlier, the girls carefully adjusted their bodily practices in consideration of the two institutional guidelines. Another factor to consider in their

decisions about the appropriate appearance is that of social expectations. Also, notwithstanding their high valuation of the pretty girl subject position, the girls managed not to look *too* girlie: *Gong-ju-byung* (Princess Syndrome). As they negotiated, nonconformity was policed and marginalized. Girls individually and collectively constructed, negotiated, and reconstructed girlishness based on appearances in situating themselves in a multilayered context (Swain, 2002)

No piercing.

As members of the broader society, girls of Ms. Jung's class evaluated their bodies and bodily practices in terms of social expectations of children in Korean culture. Although the pretty girl subject position was valued in by society in general, young girls were discouraged from certain types of bodily practices—make-up, cosmetic surgery, and piercing. Therefore, the girls constructed girlish girlhoods while considering the culturally approved bodily practices for young girls. What follows is a conversation about piercing:

> Girls at an art table draw a picture, talking about whether they like jeans or leggings. Yoon-su touches her right ear and speaks to Sung-woo, sitting next to her:
>
> 1. Yoon-su: I'm going to wear earrings. I'm going to pierce my ears.
> 2. Ju-min: It's going to bleed at first.
> 3. Yu-na: You're going to get cranky at your mom when it hurts.
> 4. So-jung: (*to Jun-hee*) Are you going to pierce them if it doesn't hurt?
> 5. Jun-hee: (*with raised tone*) No.
> 6. Ju-min: Aren't there ones that you don't have to pierce your ears?
> 7. So-jung: Even if it hurts you're going to have to deal with it because you said you would pierce them.
> 8. Yu-na: You can't ever take them out.
> 9. Yoon-su: No, you turn it like this and you can take it out.

10. Sung-woo: I know you can take it out if you turn it like this (*touching back side of her left ear lobe*)
11. So-jung: Earrings don't look pretty on children's ears.
12. Yoon-su: Ms. Yoon. I'm going to get earrings.
13. Jun-hee: (*to me*) It hurts a lot, doesn't it?
14. Yu-na: I can use earrings that you can use without piercing your ears.
15. Yoon-su: It doesn't make your ears bleed?
16. Ju-min: Yeah, it does.
17. Yoon-su: No.
(FN0906200508)

Yoon-su opened the heated argument of the appropriateness of pierced earrings by declaring her wish to get her ears pierced. The girls at the art table started a beauty/fashion talk about piercing. And they unanimously agreed about the inappropriateness of piercing for themselves by mentioning bleeding (lines 2 & 16), a secondary negative consequence caused by pain (line 3), alternatives to pierced earrings (lines 6 & 14), physical consequences (lines 7 & 13), and irreversible consequences (line 8). Responding with silence to the girls' disapproval of her wish to have pierced ears, Yoon-su did not take back her idea. Then, So-jung finally and directly asserted piercing as an inappropriate practice for young girls by saying, "Earrings don't look pretty on children's ears." By saying this, I believe that So-jung suggests the age-related criteria to decide whether or not a certain adorning practice is appropriate for a girl.

Despite girls' possession of earrings at home and their practices of wearing earrings for special occasions (IT 10072005), the girls in the above vignette repudiated pierced earrings as a possible way to perform girlishness for early childhood girls. To refute Yoon-su, who wants to cross the child/adult binary, the girls relied on knowledge of piercing gleaned from previous beauty talks with adult females, mostly mothers. While

it's true that physical pain is the cost of piercing, I think it is exaggerated by adults in order to postpone young girls' participation in certain beauty practices.

The girls' negotiation provoked by Yoon-su's desire to pierce her ears demonstrates that the girls are cautious about what the broader society expects of early childhood girls. The girls constituted the locally appropriate appearance by modifying bodily practices in order to satisfy social expectations. Despite wearing accessories, the girls did not value piercing. They even invalidated Yoon-su' attempt to construct her girlhood. Instead of referring to the unfavorable consequences of piercing, So-jung pointed out rather the inappropriateness of piercing for children. In doing this, So-jung took a firm position as a child and resisted piercing, which was regarded as appropriate for adult females. I argue that this vignette suggests the tension provoked by girls' multiple subject positions.

Princess syndrome.

Girls' negotiation of appropriate girlishness based on appearance is observed in their understanding of "*Gong-ju-byung* (Princess Syndrome)" (Seo, J. H. & Hong, S. M, 2003). In this section, I outline how the girls construct the meaning of princess syndrome, a term which has been used broadly in Korean society. Then, I move to how princess syndrome dominates and controls girls' constructions of girlish girlhoods. Princess syndrome, as I see it, is the complicated and contradictory reaction to certain types of femininity in Korean culture. As can be inferred from the term itself, it is a certain performance of girlishness, symbolized by the image of a princess, which is parodied,

mocked, and criticized by having "syndrome" attached to it. Because of a lack of relevant literature, I explore ideas regarding the princess syndrome through peer-briefing with Korean adult females. As far as I know, princess syndrome is a neologism that originated in the Korean entertainment business. It was first used to refer to an actress who possessed or had performed with an immature attitude and manner of speaking and had done so in magnificent dresses.

Being labeled as princess syndrome is not necessarily a serious insult for these females.[33] As it is often used to criticize the "excessiveness" in performing stereotypical femininity, not the stereotypical femininity itself, its sting is sometimes lessened. I think that princess syndrome is a matter related to the appropriate level of performing stereotypical femininity. Although they are not in the exact same thread of discussion, many studies indicate that girls walk a fine line in deciding on the appropriate level at which to perform their femininity (Lees, 1993). Renold (2000), and Russell and Tyler (2002) refer to the existence of social pressure to make girls carefully examine whether they are girlie or too girlie (Russell & Tyler, 2002), or tarty or too tarty (Renold, 2000).

The following shows how 5-and 6-year-olds' use the term:

> Jin-ho (*boy*) calls Sei-young princess syndrome, as he sits at a book center and looks at her. She has just walked to a book center having come to class in her vanilla dress, which she actually calls a princess dress, ivory stockings with pastel-toned, pink floral embroideries, and a hair style that

[33] I know that syndrome is used as something that someone has or is suffered from in English. But the way the girls use princess syndrome does signify that it is way of being. Based on the way princess syndrome is used by the girls, it is something what a girl is and does like gender that we do not have, but we do. So when I discuss princess syndrome in this section, I follow the girls' way to use it despite my recognition of grammatical awkwardness.

> makes her look mature. Listening to Jin-ho, Sei-young responds to him, "Hey" in a prolonged sweet and flirtatious voice
> (FN 1023300505)

From Sei-young's voice and attitude, I sensed no intention on her part to make him stop calling her princess syndrome. The way students in Ms. Jung's class used princess syndrome provoked me to explore the locally constructed meaning of princess syndrome through a series of interviews with the girls and boys.

Data from interviews suggests that members of Ms. Jung's class idiosyncratically construct the local meaning of princess syndrome (IT10242005). Compared to the inclusive meaning of princess syndrome in Korean culture, students in Ms. Jung's class tended to share an understanding of it with an emphasis on constructions of girlishness as a pretty girl on or through body or bodily practice. Some members in the research setting accounted for princess syndrome by saying that it only means prettiness. Jin-ho (*boy*) defined princess syndrome as "a girl is handsome like a princess." After In-woo's (*boy*) correction, Jin-ho amended his definition to "pretty like a princess." Negative or, at least, critical intentions cannot be found in the two boys' explanations; other boys demonstrated a similar appreciation of the princess syndrome as Jin-ho and In-woo.

Similarly, Sei-young defined princess syndrome in a positive way; in fact, she was the one girl who agreed with the boys' definition. The above vignette clearly illustrates Sei-young's favorable response to being labeled "princess syndrome." Even during the interview (IT 10242005), Sei-young defined princess syndrome as "wearing a pretty dress like a princess." Based on this definition, Sei-young accounted for Jin-ho's calling her princess syndrome because of her vanilla dress. That is, for Sei-young, since

princess syndrome is the performance of a pretty girl, being said to have princess syndrome is flattering or complimenting her performance as a pretty girl.

However, some girls in Ms. Jung's class appreciated princess syndrome as a term with negative connotations. Mentioning her older sister, Jun-hee articulated princess syndrome as a girl who thinks that she is pretty and wears skirts "everyday." Her appreciation of princess syndrome included a critique of its excessive adherence to wearing skirts, which is the gendered material symbol of traditional and stereotypical feminine beauty. In addition, Jun-hee told me that it can be used to mock other girls based on her sister's experience: "My sister made fun of others, calling them princess syndrome." Similar to Jun-hee, Tae-yun and Yun-a defined princess syndrome as an exclusive preference for a princess-like dress. Tae-yun specified, ". . . it is a girl who only likes to dress up like a princess" (IT10242005).

Another defining aspect of princess syndrome is pretentiousness. This became clear in interviews with So-jung and Ju-min. So-jung says, "A girl might not have princess syndrome even if her dress is like a *Del-le-ri* [a girl who follows]. However, if a girl in a *Del-le-ri* dress thinks that she is the only pretty one, she has princess syndrome" (IT 10242005). According to So-jung, girls' constructions of girlishness as pretty girls through wearing princess-like dresses were not problematic. Nevertheless, a pretty girl should present herself modestly.

Girls in the research setting constructed a slightly different meaning of princess syndrome than that circulated in the broader society by associating it to girls' appearance. But they illustrated a huge difference with respect to whether they appreciated the

negative connotations of princess syndrome. With a keen sense of the mockery inherent in the princess syndrome, some girls invalidated other girls' constructions of girlish girlhood. They labelled, critiqued, and looked down on other girls' practices of performing as pretty girls: "Look at her [Hae-in]. She's not pretty, is she? Her clothes are not pretty at all. Princess Syndrome" (FN0926200504). Considering the fact that being a pretty girl is a more desirable and valuable status for the girls in peer-culture and a broader society, girls' calling other girls princess syndrome cannot be separate from a struggle to be a pretty girl and to gain higher status.

But I think that the interpretation of princess syndrome from the perspective of female competition is the result of the narrow focus given to only interpersonal relations between girls. Considering where the girls try to position themselves in a wide range of femininity by using princess syndrome, the girls' subversive construction of girlhood becomes noticed. By deploying the term to invalidate others, some girls positioned themselves away from the excessive and pretentious girlish girlhood it typically signifies. Drawing from what they see in society at large, these girls problemetized a certain type of femininity connoted by "princess" and claimed their otherness from it. Some girls subverted the notion of being like a princess by using, mockingly, princess syndrome. As with Russell and Tyler (2002), some girls in Ms. Jung's class recognized the line they should not cross when performing girlishness as a pretty girl. Also, through peer debriefing with Korean females and my niece, girls' subversion against the hyper-femininity became clearer to me. That line in Ms. Jung's class, according to several of

them, is “to wear skirts everyday.” Tiptoeing on that line, many girls critically examined their appearance and divested themselves from certain types of femininity.

Gain Some Wight, You Skinny Body: Girls’ Resistance to Normalized Appearance

In Korea since the late’80s, a slim body has been regarded as key to female beauty (Han, 1998). Many reports consistently prove that the stigma that comes with not having a slim body in Korean society has caused female adolescents and adults to perceive themselves as fat even when in the normal weight range (Kim, A. 2006). More seriously, dieters today are getting younger and younger much as in Western societies. According to a recent survey done by the Korean Minister of Health and Welfare, nearly three fourths of young girls (aged from 11 to 17) are on diets. (as cited in Institute of Korean women, 2005). However, there has been no discussion of how young girls perpetuate the myth of the slim body in a kindergarten class. With these issues in mind, this section presents and discusses how girls in Ms. Jung’s class marginalized a fat body and normalized a slim one. The aim is to describe how 5-and 6-year-old girls are constituted and constitute girlishness embodied in slimness. Then I discuss the girls’ communal resistance toward the idea of a slim body.

Most girls in Ms. Jung’s class were within the normal weight range. Some girls looked heavier and bigger than others; however, considering their height, they did not look overweight. Among the top third of the tallest girls in the research setting, only You-jin might be regarded as overweight. Although her weight didn’t require medical attention, according to Ms. Jung, You-jin’s mother had been careful in You-jin’s diet in

order to prevent further weight gain and future issues such as exclusion or bullying in elementary school.

In spite of the visibility of You-jin's weight, members of Ms. Jung's class did not mention it in public. This cultured and mannered obliviousness to You-jin's weight changed to mockery and sarcastic giggles in private or with a trusted friend. Several of the girls problematized You-jin's weight by drawing on the social expectations of a female and decided to exclude her: "Let's ignore her when she approaches us. O.K?" (FN 1006200536). The following vignette is another incident of girls' marginalizing You-jin because of her weight.

> You-jin, wearing a nametag that says "today's helper," walks to the swings. While Min-ju and Su-hyun play in the sand area with plastic trowels, buckets, sieves, and aircraft shaped vessels, Min-ju looks at You-jin walking:
>
> 1. Min-ju: ((*putting sand in a vessel and indicating You-jin*)) Fatty.
> 2. Su-hyun: ((*looking up and giggling*)) I know. I know.
> 3. Min-ju: ((*like singing*)) It says Fatty is Ms. Jung's class helper.
> 4. Su-hyun: That's funny.
> 5. Min-ju: ((*laughing*)) I know.
> (FN 1109200527)

Su-hyun implied the deviation of You-jin's body from what it is supposed to be. Min-ju and Su-hyun observed, evaluated, and problematized You-jin's body. For Min-ju and Su-hyun, being overweight was not a possibility for a girl. It was unacceptable and funny.

I interviewed Min-ju and Su-hyun in order to further explore their ideas about being overweight (IT11092005). Describing a fat body as "really funny," both of them objected to a fat body and connected a slim body to prettiness, "because skinny figures are prettier." The two girls acknowledged that the desirability of a slim body is imposed

socially and culturally on females. To my question regarding the reason for their preference for a slim body, the two girls only said "because I like skinny bodies and I don't like fat ones." I think that the answer suggests their normalization of slimness as nonnegotiable for constructions of girlishness based on appearance. In addition, the two girls regard exercise and dance as the proper way to have slim bodies. I think that girls' knowledge about making slim bodies and desire for slim bodies indicates their constructions of girlhood by reflecting the dominant image of a female body that prevails in society.

The critical attitude toward being overweight also appears in Yoon-su's gossip with Sei-young when gossiping about a Korean female singer who had recently lost around 20 pounds through starvation (FN 1107200536).[34]

Yoon-su and Sei-young do an activity at an art table together.

1.Yoon-su : You know Sora Lee [the singer]?
2. Sei-young: Sora Lee?
3. Yoon-su: Don't you know her? Sora has a boyfriend. I mean she is an actress. No. No. She is a singer. Um. . . she said that she did not know how to exercise. So she didn't eat to lose weight. She has become skinny now. Now, she's become very skinny.
. . .
4. Jae-hui: Well, can I ask you something?
5. Yoon-su: Yes
6. Jaeh-hui: That Sora Lee person, why did she lose weight? Did she do it because her boyfriend told her to?
7. Sei-young: No. Don't you know? You were listening, too.
8. Yoon-su: Her boyfriend told her to lose weight
9. Jae-hui: So she lost weight because her boyfriend told her to?
10. Sei-young: Yes.
11. Jae-hui: Why did her boyfriend tell her to lose weight?

[34] According to *Han-kuk-il-bo* (Han-kuk Newspaper) 3 November 2005, this singer had lost almost 20 pounds since March 2005 only through starvation. In fact, her newly transformed body was covered in most entertainment news formats in Korea.

12. Sei-young: Becau::se she's too fat. Hey, isn't Sora Lee way too fat?
13. Yoon-su: Seriously.
14. Sei-young: She's too fat, Sora Lee.
(FN 1107200536)

Through recasting and interpreting the story of a female singer, Yoon-su and Sei-young reproduced the dominant image of a female. Except for one thing related to the boyfriend, what the two girls talked to each other about was generally built upon widely-circulated entertainment news. From my interpretation, Yoon-su's version of the starving singer story portrays the politics of a slim female body by inserting a boyfriend. Both girls perceived the slim body as something that the female singer should not deny. Indeed, her deviant body was the only subject that needed to be fixed and corrected. Moreover, both girls valued the female singer's attempts to conform to the desire of her boyfriend, which is one of many social pressures upon a female. For the girls, in order to appropriately perform girlishness on/through the body, it did not really matter even if she starved herself. So Yoon-su and Sei-young did not resist the idea that the boyfriend could violate the singer's right to control her body. Rather, to my question which subtly resisted the idea of female subservience, they displayed obvious distain. As suggested by Gilbert (1998) in a study on Australian children, many girls in the research setting have already conformed to the social norm in terms of what the body, particularly the female body, should look like.

Slimness, as the norm of girls' bodies, was criticized, mocked, and resisted by a group of girls in the research setting. These girls denied the regulatory power of the social norm, insisted on self-determination with their bodies, and made fun of a slim body.

1. Jae-hui: I heard a story that someone had a boyfriend who told her to lose weight so she did. What do you guys think of that?
2. So-jung: It's okay if you. . . (*chanting a silly song*) go on the piano and tell us to lose weight.
3. Jae-hui: What do you think? Jung-min?
4. Jung-min: I don't know
5. Hyun-sung (boy): You still don't have to.
6. Jae-hui: Jun-hee?
7. So-jung: (*still chanting a silly song*) Frog said to lose weight because he said so.
8. Jae-hui: You have to lose weight if someone tells you to?
9. Jun-hee: (*thinking for a few seconds*) You don't have to. You can lose weight if you want to.

Hyun-sung brings up his nanny who is probably overweight and everybody listens to his story.

……..

10. Jae-hui: ((*looking at Jun-hee*)) Do you guys think it's up to that person?
11. So-jung: Yes, it's up to you. If you want to lose weight then you lose weight.
12. Jun-hee: It's your body so it's your choice. If someone tells you to die, will you die?
13. Jun-hee: If someone tells you to die, do you have to die right now?
14. Jae-hui: Um… No. No, of course not.

Every interviewee looks at me and enjoys my frustration.

15. So-jung: See?
16. Jae-hui: ((*changing the topic*)) So you think it's the same thing? What do you think about being skinny?
17. So-jung: Gain some weight, you skinny body (*chanting*).
18. Jung-min: Gain some weight. Gain some weight.

Every one including Jun-hee and Hyun-sung chants "gain some weight". (IT 11102005).

Contrary to several girls who urged their preference for a slim body, Ju-min, So-jung, Jun-hee and Hyun-sung (boy) seemed to invalidate the currently valorized body for females in Korea. So-jung especially clarified her denial of a slim body. Furthermore, So-

jung ridiculed the social expectations by chanting a silly song.[35] So-jung's attitude of mocking the social expectation of a slim body was shared by the other interviewees. They enjoyed watching So-jung's resistance to a slim body with laughs and giggles. In the matter of how an individual responds to the social expectation, Jun-hee mentioned the individual's right to determine her body shape.

According to Jun-hee, whether to lose weight or not should be decided only by an individual's desire. That is, an individual does not necessarily need to follow the social expectation if she/he does not want to; simultaneously, if she/he wants to, she/he can. Jun-hee's firm point of an individual's right to determine her/his body was supported by the other interviewees above. As for my doubt about the capacity of an individual female to determine her body in line 10, So-jung and Jun-hee emphasized an individual's agency in deciding the shape and size of her/his body. In line 12, Jun-hee even disputed my question: "If someone tells you to die then will you die?" My speechlessness did not escape So-jung. Not just resistant to the socially and culturally constructed ideal body of slimness for females in Korea, everybody in the interview started celebrating the opposite ideas of the social expectation: "Get some weight, you skinny body."

The majority of the girls already knew what kind of appearance is socially valued and approved of outside of kindergarten. The same age group of children in Australia showed similar preferences for certain body shapes and forms (Gilbert, 1998).

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[35] According to Ms. Jung in the post-research setting interview (RJ12192005), she described So-jung's ability to generate a funny story as her way to deal with a difficult situation. The data also displays the fact that So-jung's ability to narrate a funny and even naughty story would make her obtain and maintain her dominant status in peer relationships (FN 1116200510).

Furthermore, most girls did not simply perceive the socially approved body. They also constructed and reconstructed it discursively in a kindergarten classroom by circulating a story of a slim body and marginalizing a fat body. The girls endorsed a slim body as what their bodies should be and problematized an aberration like You-jin's. Agreeing on body image, some girls were unable to object to the story of a Korean female singer who lost weight by starving herself. In other words, some girls in the research settings were disempowered by the dominant image of a slim body. But other girls, like So-jung, Jun-hee, and Ju-min, criticized the oppressive practices that attended it and rejected it by relying on an individual's right to make decisions regarding their own bodies. This group of girls collectively subverted slimness in a very amusing way, chanting "Gain some weight, you skinny body."

Summary

By drawing on Butler and Davies, I have addressed the girls' constructions of appearance-based girlish girlhood. I began the discussion with a description of the girls' gendered bodies, laying emphasis on what makes girls bodies gendered. The girls of Ms. Jung's class successfully performed their unequivocal girlishness relying on gendered colors, feminizing details, and accessories. By carefully arranging and adopting repetitively these three gender signifying elements, the girls' bodies became feminized discursively. Trendy gender-signifying items in the market were collectively shared among the girls and contributed to their communal practices as girlish girls.

The girls particularly invested themselves in maintaining three subtypes of girlish appearance: a pretty appearance, a well-groomed appearance, and a properly-covered appearance. Along with Davies (2003) who views appearance as key to how a girl learns her way of being, I perceive these appearances to indicate different subject positions. These three subject positions are not mutually exclusive or compete with each other; rather they are intertwined and constitute girlish girlhood.

In the local classroom, the three subject positions were interrupted and interfered with by girls' other status as female students. Under certain social, cultural, and institutional constraints, the three subject positions were consistently (re)negotiated among the girls. While doing so, they constructed a locally appropriate appearance for inside and outside kindergarten. The girls especially demonstrated frequent negotiations related to wearing skirts. The tension at the intersection of being girlish girls and being students compelled the girls to adjust their practices and ultimately to multiply the local girlhoods. By adopting different strategies, the girls multiplied and complicated the constructed girlish girlhood. In addition, the 5- and 6-year-old girls carefully considered the social and cultural constraints in constructing girlhoods: piercing and princess syndrome.

The girls of Ms. Jung's class questioned and subverted the dominant way of being girls: being slim. Instead of copying the dominant way of being a girl, the girls multiplied and complicated the dominant image of girlish girls. In the research setting, the collective and explicit resistance toward the dominant image of a female body in Korea was witnessed in the girls' chanting, "Gain some weight, you skinny body." Invoking

individual rights/freedom of choice, So-jung, Jun-hee, and Jung-min repudiated the oppressive practices imposed on female bodies. Moreover, they boldly mocked the dominant image of a slim body. I regard the girls' usage of princess syndrome as their implicit resistance to the femininity represented by princess syndrome. Some girls in the research setting who possessed a keen awareness of the mockery embedded in princess syndrome and positioned themselves at a distance from the socially and culturally legitimized girlhood.

Girls' Constructions of Oppositional Girlhoods

Young children construct and are constructed by gender by positioning themselves correctly within the gender binary (Davies, 2003; Francis, 1998; Marshall, 2000), which is socially and historically constituted as a "cultural fiction" (Butler, 1999). As the underlying structure in many modern societies, the gender binary compels children to take the right position from the first day of their lives– as either a girl or a boy. Young children invest great energy into fitting into exclusive and narrow subject positions congruent with their biological sexes. Furthermore, according to Davies (2003), they eliminate any ambiguity from their lived practices in order to continue the gender binary. She calls it "category maintenance work" (p. 31).

In this section, I detail the second emerging construction of girlhood: being the opposite of the other within the gender binary. First, I describe girls' occupying of separate space, and categorizing play themes and/or materials according to gender. This is to highlight how the gender binary operates in the girls' everyday classroom practices. Also addressed are the girls' negotiations of and struggle with the gender binary. I then

focus on the girls' practices of being both with and separate from boys: borderwork (Thorne, 1993) is one type of category maintenance work. The three sub-types of borderwork—contests, chasing, and the girls' team—are explored in detail. In examining girls' practices, my intention lays emphasis on how the gender binary is maintained in girls' borderwork. Finally, the discussion swings to girls' crossing-over the gender binary as consumers, viewers, and/or players by participating in masculinized warrior narratives (Jordan & Cowan, 1995; MacNaughton, 1994; Paley, 1984). [36]

Drawing on Davies (2003), I try to delineate girls' constructions of girlhood as the opposite within the gender binary in a way that is distinct from the dominant literature in the ECE field. Instead of perpetuating girls' separate practices as the consequence or evidence of gender differences, I approach them as a fuction of the current gender system. Before moving on to the interpretation and analysis of girls' practices in Ms. Jung's class, I review Davies's (2003) category maintenance work.

Category Maintenance Work

In her book, *Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales* (2003), Davies theorizes about children's category maintenance work through a close examination of children's readings of feminist stories. She writes:

> Thus individuals can deviate, but their deviation will give rise to *category-maintenance work* around the gender boundaries. This category-maintenance

[36] Warrior narratives, according to Jordand & Cowan (1995), legitimize and justify violence when it occurs within a struggle between good and evil. Most warrior narratives depict a male as a warrior opposed to some evil figures.

> work is aimed partly at letting the 'deviant' know they've got it wrong. Teasing is often enough to pull someone back into line—but primarily it is aimed at maintaining the category as a meaningful category in the face of the individual deviation that is threatening it. (p. 31)

Category maintenance work can be described as children's daily practices in continuing the gender binary by removing any vagueness between the two polarities of gender. In fact, as the underlying social structure of realities, the gender binary discursively interferes in various ways with fair competition among numerous possible ways of being a girl or a boy (Blaise, 2005; Davies, 2003; Francis, 1998). One single way (or the narrow range) of being a girl or a boy congruent with the gender binary becomes more valuable, desirable, and normal. Therefore, under the gender binary system, young children are regulated to position themselves either as a girl or as a boy "with not much room for the blurring" (Blaise, 2005, p. 97). If they fail to position themselves in "the right category," it is often interpreted as some kind of developmental delay that needs, at best, to be corrected or fixed (Martin, 2005).

By positioning themselves in the narrow subject position legitimized by the dichotomized gender, girls are performed and perform themselves as separate, distinctive, and even oppositional beings from boys (Francis, 1998). Also, they exercise power over "in-between girls" who have positioned themselves somewhere between the two polarities of gender. By carrying out category maintenance work, girls remove the in-between subject position that reveals the fictitiousness of the gender binary. Ultimately, such positions challenge the dynamics of power, desirability, and value granted under the

gender binary. Therefore, in their gender construction within the gender binary, as Blaise (2005) states, young children ensure that gender differences are maintained in a classroom. Similarly, Francis (1998) and Änggård (2005) present a reconceptualized account of girls' dissimilar practices from boys.

Girls' Separation from the Others

In order to describe Korean girls' constructions of oppositional girlhood, I discuss girls' spatial separation in classroom discussions and indoor free-choice activities. Then the girls' gendered categorization of play themes and/or play materials according to gender follows. The girls desired and valued stereotypically feminine play themes and play materials, and rejected masculine ones, like firefighter play. In doing category maintenance work in relation to play themes, the girls of Ms. Jung's class exercised power in the process of making pedagogical decisions (FN 0930200519).

"That is the center boys like": The invisible curtain in Ms. Jung's class.

Many studies on gender in school refer to a voluntarily drawn gendered line between two groups of students (Boyle et al., 2003; Eder, Evans & Parker, 1995; Thorne, 1993). From observing primary school, researchers frequently report different ways of occupying space on the playground. The girls in the research setting separated themselves from boys by occupying different areas. Shortly after my observation began, I noticed that in many different contexts the girls formed effortlessly into clusters distant from boys.

As Paley (1984) depicts, there was an "invisible curtain" (p.30) between the girls and boys, which could not be opened and passed through.

Unrestricted by assigned seating, the girls formed gendered clusters and designated their preference of where to sit during classroom discussions. In spite of day to day changes, the girls usually occupied the front row of the carpet or the middle of the second row, and left the back row for boys (RJ09062005). Usually, even though they fashioned a gendered sitting pattern, students did not speak of this clear dichotomy. However, when the girls' side and the boys' side were announced (FN0913200503), it brought an entirely different dynamic to Ms. Jung's class. In contrast to their earlier tolerance of other students' seating arrangements, the students tried to control other students' seating choices by enacting category maintenance work.

When members of Ms. Jung's class activated the gender dichotomy during classroom discussion, they divided themselves into girls and boys and rearranged their original sitting pattern. During the process, Jun-hee, who initially sat in the middle of two spaces, perceived the operating gender boundary in this context and immediately relocated herself. The visible and obvious gender dichotomy pressed each student to "correctly" reposition her- or himself within a binary group. If, say, a boy fails to join the boys' side, he is asked, "Are you a girl?" or "Are you on the girls' team?" As Davies (2003) indicates, this blunt and powerful question rectifies any suspicious or deviant gender performance. Although the students explained to Ms Jung that they separated "because we don't like them." The antagonism was lightened with laughs, giggles, and exaggerations.

There were few opportunities for the class as a whole to assert any strict division between girls and boys. However, small-scale gender separation in terms of space occupation was frequently observed. Students of Ms. Jung's class called accidental sitting on the wrong side of the dichotomized gender as "locked-up." In the following vignette, girls mock one boy sitting amongst girls (FN 1103200538) at the snack table:

> Sei-young, Soo-jin in a snack table, Jae-youn (boy).
>
> 1. Soo-jin: He is locked up… locked up.
> 2. Tae-yun: Right. You are locked up.
> 3. Jae-youn: (finishing his snack and standing)
> 4. Jae-hui: What do you mean "locked up"?
> 5. Min-ju: He is in the middle of (inaudible). . .
> 6. Jae-hui: You are locked up in the middle?
> 7. Soo-jin: No. It's not that but you know if there's one boy and two girls? Then, the girls win.
> 8. Tae-yun: No, the boy has to sit in the middle of two girls.
> 9. Sei-young: That's right. See, if these two are boys (indicating the two seats on either side of Soo-jin) then Soo-jin's locked up.
> Yes. If boys sit on both sides of a girl, she is locked up.
> 10. Jae-hui: (*to Tae-yun*) then Soo-jin is locked up by us, isn't she?
> 11. Se-eun: Um. If one seat's empty between you and Soo-jin, she's not locked up. Right? Soo-jin?
> (FN1103200538)

Most girls in the research setting went along with this definition (FN1017200513): sitting between opposite gender peers without any empty spots between them. Jun-hee is the only girl who argued that a girl or boy can be "locked-up" without sitting next to the opposite gender. I perceived that the girls implied that being locked-up violates the gender dichotomy. And although calling one "locked-up" was done teasingly, it did call unwanted attention to the person and his or her seated position. Its use helped reassert the gender dichotomy violated by an errant student. And using such category maintenance was how the girls constructed themselves as beings opposite from boys.

Another spatial separation of girls from boys frequently occurred during indoor free-choice activities. The girls hung out with other girls—occasionally only girls—in some centers more than others, for example, in art or language centers, areas regarded as feminized subject areas (Danby, 1998; Harper & Huie, 1998; Paley, 1984; Park, S. Ya. 2001). The field notes record that girls selected these centers more frequently and stayed there longer. This spatial separation was also revealed in students' daily planning charts for indoor free-choice activity. The girls' practices in Ms. Jung's class are consistent with the existing body of literature with respect to their frequent choice of art or language. However, I would urge this finding also be carefully appreciated considering my proximity to the girls during data collection. I located myself near girl-dominant or girl-only groups in order to efficiently gather data. Subsequently, the girls' oppositional girlhood constructions during indoor free-choice activity might have been overemphasized by my location.

Most girls of Ms. Jung's class selected an art, language or math and manipulative (puzzle) center and then added other centers depending on the length of indoor free-choice activity (FN 1007200515). The literature has acknowledged as an indicator of gender difference girls' frequent choices of certain centers and their lingering in those areas (Corsaro, 2005; Park, S. Ya. 2001). Instead of following the dominant perspective in the field of ECE, I discuss girls' gendered choices as part of their efforts to correctly position themselves in the gender dichotomy. A girl evaluates whether each center is appropriate or not for her gender. Her gender-based evaluations of a center come to limit and regulate her lived experience in a classroom as a student (Dutro, 2002). While several

girls and I discussed the reason for their lack of experience with newly provided materials in the science center, they claimed a distance from science, saying, “That is the center boys like” (FN1118200543). Clarifying the gendered preference for certain centers, they implied that the gender dichotomy dominates their choices for indoor free-choice activity. Considering the significance of play to children, I would argue that the girls’ learning was to some extent regulated by the gender binary.

Making non-gendered choices during indoor free-choice activity is not easy for girls because they are the target of category maintenance work. If a girl crosses over the gender dichotomy she faces unfavorable reactions from her female peers. The following subtly illustrates this point.

> Soo-jin and Sung-woo are planning together for indoor free-choice activity.
>
> 1. Sung-woo: I am going to play. . . . . I am going to go to the book center.
> 2. Soo-jin: Let’s check language. O.K. Book center (*drawing a circle under the column of book center*).
> 3. Sung-woo: (*drawing a circle and repeating Soo-jin*) Language
> 4. Soo-jin: Circle language.
> 5. Sung-woo: (*drawing a circle*) And what else?
> 6. Soo-jin: Math center
> 7. Sung-woo: (*drawing a circle*) What else?
> 8. Soo-jin: (*looking around a classroom and drawing a circle on her planning chart*) Science center
> 9. Sung-woo: (*pausing and looking at Soo-jin*) Science?
> 10. Soo-jin: Let’ do “drawing fallen leaves.”
> (FN 1118200540).

The girls usually planned for indoor free-choice activity with their group members or dyadic partners. Sung-woo and Soo-jin smoothly reached an agreement. But, when Soo-jin suggested the science center as their next choice, Sung-woo paused and looked up from the planning chart. Sung-woo seemed to be saying, “Are you serious?” Because

science was regarded as geared toward boys, Sung-woo was likely to perceive choosing science as an unsuitable decision. In fact she was not simply asking a question; Sung-woo was engaging in category maintenance work. Soo-jin quickly assured Sung-woo that in the science center they will be "drawing." After hearing her out, Sung-woo consented and circled the column marked science center. Copying the veins of leaves in fact will do as art work, regarded as appropriate for girls.

Making gendered choices for indoor free-choice activity begins the girls' separation from boys in a classroom. More pointedly, it betrays the regulatory influence of the gender dichotomy on so-called free choice. Any deviant choice regarding the gender dichotomy instantly calls into play category maintenance work. However, the above vignette also implies that girls' separation during indoor free-choice activity is contextually bound. The girls occasionally crossed the gender boundary by choosing boys' centers like blocks or science depending on materials or activities provided by Ms. Jung to the girls. When the class constructed a miniature of the classroom with wooden blocks, girls took part in block center, with Ms. Jung's encouragement, escalated significantly (FN1201200501).

The girls were willing to exercise power over other girls not on the designated side. Gender category maintenance work was again employed. The girls' separation often led to girl-only or girl-dominant groups in which the girls communally constructed and negotiated girlhoods. According to the field notes, most of the girls' discussions of exploring appropriate girlhoods arose in exclusive peer-culture. Also, within the peer culture, the girls unreservedly shared and enjoyed traditionally feminine cultural ideas or

items. Revealing their favorites or desire for certain cultural ideas or items in front of boys could bring about humiliation. For instance, when some girls mentioned *Hello Kitty* at an art center, the boys at the same table lambasted it, exclaiming "childish" (IT 1013200544). Suddenly, the most famous kitten in the world with plump cheeks and a pink ribbon was made to be shameful. Faced with being humiliated for their enjoyment of certain cultural items, the girls of Ms. Jung's class seemed to prefer being in a girls-only or girls-dominant groups like the adolescent girls of McRobbie's (2000) study. According to McRobbie, adolescent girls organize a girl-only group in an exclusive space to protect their own culture from school authorities and boys. Thus, most of their fashion/beauty talk occurs when they are with other girls.

Kitty blocks for girls, Spiderman blocks for boys.

A significant portion of ECE literature consistently reports gender separation in observations of natural or lab settings (Corsaro, 1985; Hyun, E. S. & Choi, D. W., 2002; Kim, K. O., 2004; Maccoby, 1994; Park, S. Ya., 2001). The most frequently mentioned separation practices of young children in literature are related to play: gendered preferences for play materials, types, or partners. Hyun, E. S. and Choi, D. W. (2002) report Korean and U.S. young children's perceptions of gender differences in relation to several aspects of play. Many studies offer the following reasons for causing gender separation among children: commonalities in play interests, compatibilities of behaviors, or established gender schema (Maccoby, 2000). Perceiving gender separation as the embodiment of gender differences that are biologically or socially programmed into

young children, ECE literature has hitherto offered simplified strategies to alleviate young children's separation. These are mainly grounded on re-socialization.

In this section, I discuss girls' gendered categorization of play themes and/or play materials. In terms of play themes, the girls constructed their oppositional girlhood by rejecting a boy's theme, a firefighter theme. When Ms. Jung's class negotiated a new theme for a dramatic center (FN 0929200522), Jun-hee objected to a firefighter theme suggested by Ji-hyung (boy), saying "Girls won't like it." Ms. Jung challenged Jun-hee's generalization and asked each girl whether she liked playing firefighter or not. Every girl endorsed Jun-hee's generalization. In the days following, several girls confirmed their objection in informal interviews.

> Mi-ra, So-jung, Jun-hee, Na-young, Ju-min are sitting at an art table and finishing their pictures.
>
> 1. Jae-hui: I have something to ask you guys. Yesterday you said you don't like playing firemen. Can you tell me why?
> 2. Ju-min: It's boring.
> 3. Mi-ra: That's right. Singing room (karaoke) play is more fun than firefighter play.
> 4. Jae-hui: What do you think? Jun-hee?
> 5. Jun-hee: I don't like playing firefighter.
>
> Girls talk for a while about what kind of play is fun.
>
> 6. Jae-hui: Why don't you like it?
> 7. Jun-hee: I didn't like it ever since I was a baby.
> 8. Mi-ra: I didn't like it since I was two.
> 9. So-jung: That's a boys' play.
> 10. Ju-min: Yeah.
> (FN0930200509).

Girls who participated in the informal interviews provided different reasons for their indifference to, or dislike of, firefighter play. First, some girls, like Ju-min and Mi-ra,

indicated that firefighter play is not "fun." As an alternative, girls offered *No-rae-bang* play (Karaoke in Korean) or hair salon play. Some girls mentioned that they have virtually always been indifferent to firefighter play. Finally, and most effectively, So-jung stressed, "That's a boys' play." I believe that So-jung's point moved beyond individual preferences or desires. In defining such play as for boys, So-jung revealed the fundamental principle in choosing play themes. So-jung dismissed firefighter play and, implicitly, validated the stereotypical gender preferences and desires for play themes.

Play materials were also categorized according to the gender dichotomy. Moreover, declaring gendered preferences for play materials, the girls constructed and were constructed by their girlhoods as being opposite to boys. Ms. Jung's class did an activity to complete a poem dedicated to the August full-moon around the time of Korean Thanksgiving (based on the lunar calendar). After reading a couple of girls' works saying that they wanted to receive presents, I asked the girls to tell me what kind of presents they wanted. Ju-min answered, "Not a robot. Anything but boys' things" (FN1005200512). After her answer, the questions focused on searching for what play materials would be appropriate for girls. With regard to their choice of play materials, girls in this research setting exhibited similarities with Western girls (reference). *Barbie* and other fashion dolls are by most girls confidently considered girls' playthings (FN 1118200521). Also, various materials (like notepads, avatar books, stickers) drawn from cartoons, *Magic Girl Remi* or *Berry Berry Muo Muo* [both are cartoons similar to *Sailor Moon*] are also thought to be appropriate for girls. When girls talked about whether blocks are for girls or boys, they considered a theme associated with toys in deciding whether play materials are

for girls or boys rather than the activities that can be done with them. For instance, Legos are chosen based on the theme.

1. Jae-hui: What else are girl toys?
2. Tae-yun: Girls' blocks?
3. Jah-hui: What are girl blocks?
4. Tae-yun: Girls' blocks? Like Kitty blocks?
5. Jaehui: Kitty blocks?
6. Tae-yun: Don't you know Kitty? Kitty? Kitty?
7. Jae-hui: I know Kitty. A cat.
8. Tae-yun: [*Girls' blocks mean*] Blocks with a picture of Kitty.
9. Jaehui: How about Lego?
10. Tae-yun: Well, that is probably for boys
11. You-jin: I play with plain blocks [with no theme...basic blocks]
12. Tae-yun: I play with boy blocks sometime, like *Harry Potter* or *Spiderman*.

(FN 1013200540)

According to Tae-yun, blocks could be for girls if they possessed a feminine quality. Therefore, girls categorized Kitty blocks for girls and *Harry Potter* or *Spiderman* blocks for boys regardless of the fact that the same activities are done with them. Similarly, Ju-min asserted that her animal blocks [decorated with animals] are for girls. Compared to other play materials, blocks are ambiguous when it comes to gender. In fact, many girls in the research setting said that they have different types of blocks at home. Instead of defining blocks as in-between materials outside the gender dichotomy, Tae-yun used an alternative criterion. In doing so, she attempted to resolve the conflict that entangled girls' playing with blocks that are usually regarded as masculine. By categorizing certain types of blocks for girls, I argue that Tae-yun preserved a space where girls can have fun with blocks. Concurrently, she indicated a young girl's attempt to unambiguously fit into the gender dichotomy. By labeling play materials as for girls or for boys, the girls sustained the gender dichotomy and performed their oppositional girlhoods.

Interestingly enough, some girls of Ms. Jung's class demonstrated the particular practices in constructing oppositional girlhood in relation to play themes. As stated above, the literature repeatedly discusses girls' preferences for a domestic themes--more precisely, taking the roles of mothers in domestic scenes. Paley's (1984) vivid description of kindergarten lives portrays girls' preference. Also, studies of narratives created by children (Änggård, 2005; Scales & Cook-Gumperz, 1993) indicates the predominance of domestic themes in girls' narratives. However, girls of Ms. Jung's class varied in their preferences for domestic themes. Some girls, such as Sei-young, Soo-jin, Sung-woo, and Yoon-su, vigorously took part in mom or kindergarten teacher role-playing. Na-young and Min-ju were less likely to participate in mom plays, even though they told me that they did mom plays at home. These girls, it turned out, turned up their noses at the lack of materials in the dramatic center of Ms. Jung's class (FN 1107200539). Furthermore, some of them, Jun-hee, So-jung, and Jung-min, called mom's play "childish" (FN 1114200513).

I see their inconsistency with the literature to be caused by the contextual particularity of the class: no clothes for dress-up and no props for domestic themes. According to Ms. Jung, compared to classrooms for younger-age groups, 5-year-old's classrooms were unequipped with furniture or props. Rather, if a theme for a dramatic center required props, they were temporarily established from time to time. Next, in the local setting, enacting a domestic theme was not desirable for a group of girls. Some

girls[37] distanced themselves from role-playing mothers, calling it childish. According to MacNaughton, a girl enthusiastically enacts a domestic theme because she becomes a mom, a powerful person in the family. I think that MacNaughton's point is also applicable to the opposite practice: If a girl does not perceive motherhood to be desirable or powerful, she will not select a domestic theme. From the girls' inconsistency in relation to preference for domestic themes for pretend play, I suggest the need to carefully consider the context in which children live, as Thorne emphasizes (1993).

Girls can do firefighter play: Category maintenance work of the girls.

The previous section described the process in which play centers, themes, and/or materials are gendered in a kindergarten classroom. Through their choices of play centers, play themes and/or materials, the girls positioned themselves and were positioned as oppositional beings in the gender dichotomy. If a girl ambiguously positioned herself between the two polarities, other girls employed category maintenance to clarify the position (Blaise, 2005; Davie, 2003; Francis, 1998). From here, the discussion moves to how the girls regulate and limit deviant or ambiguous practices in carrying out gender

[37] Ju-hee, So-jung, and Ju-hyun in particular devalued mom play as childish. The three girls in the research setting were visible in many different ways. They were more mature than most other girls in the class. As shown earlier in several vignettes, for instance Princess Syndrome, all three demonstrated a keen understanding of the twists and turns embedded in the possible ways of being a female. In other words, these three girls seemed to capture the deeply perpetuated meanings under the surface of gender ideas. Based on an elaborate understanding of being a girl, these girls exercised power over other girls to disqualify or invalidate other girls' ways of being girls. In spite of my recognition regarding the three girls' significant roles to add particularities to the locally established girlhood constructions, I will not go further than the above thought because it is beyond the scope of this study.

category maintenance work. The following exchange happened directly after the vignette that appears on page 234.

> Mi-ra, So-jung, Jun-hee, Na-young, Ju-min are sitting at an art table and finishing their pictures. Girls talk for a while about firefighter play.
>
> 1. Jae-hui: Why don't you like it?
> 2. Jun-hee: I didn't like it ever since I was a baby.
> 3. Mi-ra: I didn't like it since I was two.
> 4. So-jung: That's a boys' play.
> 5. Ju-min: Yeah.
> 6. Na-young: Girls can do firefighter play if they want.
> 7. So-jung: So you want to?
> 8. Na-young: No, it's gross.
>
> Other girls at the table laugh at Na-young's pretending to vomit. (FN0930200509).

Na-young introduced the possibility of going beyond the gender binary. She suggested that a girl's decision may be determined by her individual will rather than her gender. She also resisted the regulative dichotomized gender and its compulsory application to everyone regardless of her/his desire. However, Na-young shrewdly distanced herself from firefighter play by saying "girls" instead of "I" or "we."

The ambiguous position of Na-young espousing an in-between possibility of being a girl provoked an argument from So-jung. With a blunt question, "You want to?", So-jung demanded that Na-young make clear her own desire, not her opinion. So-jung was insinuating that Na-young had taken the wrong position. Firmly grounded in the dichotomized gender category, So-jung, with clipped speech and slightly scowling eyes, exercised power and control over Na-young by problematizing her difference of opinion and demanding she clarify it. . Backpeddling, Na-young corrected herself and

participated in the gender category maintenance work initiated by So-jung. Na-young ostentatiously demonstrated her repulsion of firefighter play by pretending to vomit.

The girls' investment in maintaining the gender dichotomy without leeway compelled some girls to keep their deviant practices secret. Tae-yun is one example. When she did an activity at the language center, she and I talked about video games. Knowing of her preference for warrior narratives, I asked her if she has locally defined girls' toys.

> 1. Jae-hui: What about *Remy*?
> 2. Tae-yun: Who?
> 3. Jae-hui: Remy.
> 4. Tae-yun: Oh Remy, ew.
> 5. Jae-hui: Why what's wrong?
> 6. Tae-yun: I don't like Remy.
> 7. Jae-hui: Why?
> 8. Tae-yun: Because the truth is I'm not a boy but I like things that boys like. I don't like *Beast Master* but I like *Miragon*.
> 9. Jae-hui: But why do you say "the truth is" like you're telling me a secret?
> 10. Tae-yun: Why? Minju Park is like that, too.
> 11. Jae-hui: Yes, you can be like that.
> 12. Tae-yun: But other girls all say they like Remy.
> 13. Jae-hui: Will it be weird if you tell kids who like Remy that you don't like Remy?
> 14. Tae-yun: What? If I tell them I don't like Remy? Well, I guess I could tell them… but if I do they won't like it because they're stuffy like that.
> (FN 1107200540)

Tae-yun appeared to be telling me a secret. Emphasizing her gender prior to saying, "not a boy", Tae-yun affirmed her gender in spite of her liking *Mir-gaon*. Tae-yun is a good example of a girl regulated by the gender dichotomy. She marginalized herself and then pointed to Min-ju's similar preference. That is, she attempted to erase any notion I might have that she is isolated. My acceptance seemed to encourage her to divulge why she

disliked *Remi*. She shared the trouble she had with the "stuffy" others in her class, thereby unmasking the category maintenance that had forced her to secrecy.

By focusing on girls' classroom practices in opposition to boys, I have illustrated how oppositional girlhoods were constituted in the research setting. By correctly positioning themselves within the gender binary, the girls sustained the gender binary in the classroom. First, this was found in their seating arrangement during classroom discussion. Without any explicit signs, the girls made clusters distant from the boys. "Locked-up" is another phenomenon that demonstrates the girls' constructions of oppositional girlhood through spatial occupation. Second, I found the predominance of the gender binary in how they played. The girls strictly categorized play centers, play themes, and play materials according to the gender binary. Firefighter play, regarded as "boy play," was unanimously rejected by the girls. The girls continuously policed the gender category to maintain it, fitting themselves into the narrow range of subject positions as beings opposite to boys. When the gender binary became blurred by in-between positions, the girls operated category maintenance work. Na-young's references to the possibility that a girl can do firefighter play and Tae-yun's preference for *Mir-gaon* over *Remi* ran afoul of the strict dichotomized gender category. Compelled to fall within the gender binary, some girls withdrew and kept secret their in-between positions. In the shadows of the established gender binary, some girls of Ms. Jung's class found a middle ground between the two polarities of gender.

Being Together, But Separate: Borderwork

Girls of Ms. Jung's class constituted the oppositional girlhoods while they interacted with boys. In this section, drawing on Thorne (1993), I show how the gender binary is maintained through borderwork. The reason for separately discussing borderwork is its particularity. The girls' practices as oppositional beings were observed when the girls were separate from boys, not just physically but also in their play themes and play materials. However, borderwork occurs when the girls are together with boys. Showing the children's choreography of being separate and being together, Thorne conceptualizes certain interactions between girls and boys as "borderwork" (p. 64). Thorne explains borderwork as:

> Although contact sometimes undermines and reduces an active sense of difference, groups may also interact with one another in ways that strengthen their borders.. . . When gender boundaries are activated, the loose aggregation "boys and girls" consolidates into "the boys" and "the girls" as separate and reified groups. In the process categories of identity that on other occasions have minimal relevance for interaction become the basis of separate collectivities. Other social definitions get squeezed out by heightened awareness of gender as a dichotomy and of "the girl" and "the boys" as opposite and even antagonistic sides. (p. 65)

As the gender boundary is established in a particular context, participants take their positions as either girls or boys valorized by dichotomized gender. Suddenly, participants' lived experiences are rearranged according to gender and to one's opposition

to another. As noted by Thorne, because the gender boundaries are "episodic and ambiguous" (p. 84), the borderwork of girls with boys may evolve differently from context to context. Sometimes the gender boundaries are activated in a playful manner; sometimes they are seriously disruptive.

Before going on I would like to clarify a number of points. In applying the concept of borderwork to girls' lived experiences in Ms. Jung's class, I have been attentive to the particularities of my study compared to Thorne's. First, she investigated a broad age range of children in elementary schools and showed less direct interest in kindergartners. Second, her observational focus was on playground time rather than on indoor settings. Due to my different observational foci, I would not have substantial data for describing each type of borderwork defined by Thorne. Third, my interest—limited to girls—generated an interpretation of borderwork distinct from hers. Among several types of brderwork—contest, chasing, invasions, the following section will discuss girls' practices engaged in contest and chasing. Also, I will elaborate girls' assertive participation in chasing: girls' team.

Contest.

As its name suggests, a contest is a type of borderwork that occurs in a classroom competition or a playground game. Except for soccer, playground games at H Kindergarten rarely took the form of team competition. As a result, the girls were not involved in game contests with boys on the playground. Even in indoor games, the girls had limited chances to enact this type of borderwork because Mrs. Jung did not divide the

class into teams according to gender. In most cases, girls were organized on a team with boys based on some other category, usually bus route. Temporarily, the new label was more influential than gender (Thorne, 1993).

Despite Ms. Jung's pedagogical decision to avoid gender competition, girls and boys voluntarily organized themselves as girls' and boys' teams. In the context in which a gender boundary was established, every other issue regarding identity other than gender was muted (Boyle et al., 2003; Thorn, 1993). Loosely scattered positions of girls and boys mixed were rapidly rearranged as either girls or boys. As a member of the girls' or the boys' team, their previous relationship—either closeness to, romantic attention in, or conflicts with the other players tended to be forgotten. Take, for example, a game of Musical Chairs:

> After a couple of rounds, there is only Soo-jin (girl) with four boys. All of a sudden, Sei-young raises her voice, "Go Soo-jin!" The rest of the girls in Group B then start cheering on Soo-jin. When the girls start supporting Soo-jin, the boys begin supporting the other boys. When Ms. Jung starts up again, five players start running around a circle. Soo-jin carefully regulates her speed in order to stay close to the four chairs. When the piano stops, Soo-jin takes a chair with three boys. All the girls exclaim, "Good! Soo-jin!" From the boys' side, disappointment mixes with eagerness for the next round. During the next round, Soo-jin and Young-jun try to sit on the same chair, and Soo-jin gets forced off. The girls on the floor are disappointed, but they congratulate Soo-jin who joins them. "You did a good job!" they tell her.
> (FN0909200519)

The girls of Group B in the above vignette activated the binary gender category, and transformed the nature of the game: from individual competition to gender competition. Once every girl except Soo-jin had lost, the girls of Group B suddenly solidified along the gender boundary and formed a girls' team to cheer on Soo-jin. Although the girls of

Group B did not overtly spell out "the girls' team," their solidarity and opposition to the boys was palpable. Of course, the boys of Group B recognized the established gender boundary and responded in kind. By cheering on the boys, they positioned themselves as the team opposite the girls' team. Soo-jin stirred up conflicting feelings on both sides when she took a chair another time. The girls' jumped up and down, shook their fists, clapped their hands, hurrahed and called out to Soo-jin. As Thorne (1993) points out, however, the gender boundary is rapidly blurred and dismantled. When Soo-jin lost, the quickly formed gender boundary dissolved. Their intense emotion, excitement, and unified voices faded. The gender dichotomy submerged.

Notwithstanding the lack of classroom contests, girls frequently participated in contests on a smaller, more private scale: a counting game. A similar ritual of counting is reported in Park, S. Ya. (2000)'s study of Korean kindergarteners. In Ms. Jung's class, counting usually happened at a snack or art table. By counting the number of boys and girls at a table and insisting on which gender won (FN 0908200510), girls drew attention to the gender boundary.

> Young-jun (boy) finishes his snack and stands up to return his plates. Ms. Jung prepares a snack for me in the spot Young-jun left. When I sit down:
> 1. Ju-min: Yes. Girls win!
> 2. Ji-ho (boy): (*in his high voice*) Three to three.
> 3. Jun-hee: She is a girl also.
> 4. Ji-ho: She is a grown-up.
> 5. Yu-na: She is a girl though.
> 6. Ju-min: Girls win.

My joining the table tips the balance in favor of the girls. Ju-min announces the girls' superiority to the boys in numbers. In designating themselves as "girls" instead of "we," she activated the gender binary. Ji-ho, however, perceived me as ineligible, and corrected

Ju-min by saying that each gender group was still tied. Jun-hee and Na-young joined the girls' team, and supported Ju-min's point by noting that membership in a gender exists regardless of age. With support from Jun-hee and Yu-na, Ju-min claimed the girls' victory.

Chasing.

Chasing, another type of borderwork defined by Thorne (1993), has been regarded as a subtype of rough-and-tumble play in the ECE field (Pellegrini & Smith, 2003). Although it is widely discussed as boys' play behavior, there is limited discussion of it from the perspective of the gendered asymmetry that takes place in it. As shown in the literature of ECE (Clarke, 1999), chasing is known as the chasing game. Ms. Jung also called it this, as did I when working as a kindergarten teacher (FN 1017200525). However, I follow the local terms used by the girls to designate chasing. In the research setting, the girls selected different words that highlighted the seriousness and disturbance implicit in a chasing activity instigated by boys.

Yu-na, an "expert" at chasing and who was chased more often than any of the other girls in the research setting, resisted my unconscious attempt to downplay the seriousness of chasing. [38]When I asked the reason for the "chasing game," Yu-na corrected me twice by firmly telling me, "It is not a game. It is a fight. A running fight"

[38] I think that Yu-na's practice of being chased more than other girls was due to her relatively weak connection to other girls. She seemed a solitary player. By calling her that, I do not mean that Yu-na was isolated from other girls. But she had no stable and steady play partner like the other girls in the research setting. Rather, my notes mark her fluidity and flexibility in choosing her play partners.

(FN 0908200513) or “chasing fight” (IT 10132005). In addition, most girls of Ms. Jung’s class called this ritualized borderwork simply “chasing,” “fight,” or “attack,” signifying the seriousness of the phenomenon. Only once did I hear it called a “chasing game,” which is when they described chasing between girls (FN 1125200510). After I observed chasing on the playground, I realized that the term, chasing game, does not fully encompass the emotional distress of girls being forced to participate in chasing.

There are some points to be mentioned. First, due to my IRB, the data is only from a portion of the participants involved in chasing at H kindergarten. Actually, the chasing involved students mainly from two classes of 5-and 6-year-olds. The “major chasers” were from a different class; consequently, my data is missing a significant piece of information. All information related to the perspective of the chasers was gathered from boys in Ms. Jung’s class who maintained close relationships with the major chasers from the other class. Next, I might be more critical in my observations of chasing than Thorne (1993) because I deeply sympathize with the girls’ physical and emotional struggles against their chasers. In spite of limitations and biases that appear in the data, I think the gathered data is sufficient to discuss girls’ daily practices of chasing for the purpose of the study: to describe girls’ constructions of girlhood as it appears in their daily practices of chasing rather than chasing itself, and, more specifically, how girls position themselves as oppositional beings within the binary of gender.

On the playground of H kindergarten, a variety of students from three classes of 5- and 6-year-olds participated in chasing. Along with the minor daily variations, the major players of chasing were composed of two groups of students: some girls from

Group A from Ms. Jung's class and three boys from different classes; I refer to them hereafter as the "major chasers." Three boys from Ms. Jung's class, In-woo, Ji-hyung, and Sung-won also participated as peripheral chasers. Other members of Ms. Jung's class occasionally took part or remained as bystanders.

Even though the participants frequently switched roles, the girls pointed out chasing's gendered structure: boys' initiate and girls' react. This gendered framework is clearly revealed in their complaints: "They [the major chasers] started saying [to other boys] attack us first. We did nothing to them, but they hit us" (FN1004200507). Not only positioning themselves against boys as passive responders, the girls highlighted the oppressive practices of chasing incited by the boys. Referring to chasing as an "attack from the boys," some girls of Ms. Jung's class described boys' physical violence (i.e., hitting, bothering, interrupting on-going activities, or snatching baseball caps). Based on their remarks, I believe that chasing is distressing, and not a game. The girls were clearly aware of the gendered structure and gendered asymmetries of chasing. Some girls organized themselves to confront the boys' team and even to seek revenge against them.

One possible explanation of the seriousness of chasing at H Kindergarten may be inferred from what students said happens during chasing. According to them, it was related to a violation of membership. Yu-na explained, "When someone gets caught by me, he or she becomes a junior member of my team" (FN 0908200513). Similarly, Jun-hee, Ji-hyung (boy), and Hyun-sung (boy) told me that chasing was an effort on the boys' part to catch girls and put them on their side (IT 10182005).

> Jun-hee, Ju-min, Hyun-sung, and Ji-hyung (boy) are reading books at the reading center while they are waiting for Group A arrives.

1. Jaehui: Do you know what happed on the playground yesterday? I mean to Yu-na?
2. Jun-hee: I already told you yesterday.
3. Ji-hyung: I think this is what happened. . . Tae-ho hit her with a sandbox play toy by accident.
4. Jun-hee: No. No. I told you yesterday. He hit her [on purpose] like this (*swinging her hands*)
5. Hyun-sung: What? On purpose? It happened when he tried to chase her. . .
6. Jaehui: Does he chase her often?
7. Jun-hee: Especially her.
8. Hyun-sung: He chases Yu-na a lot.
9. Ju-min: He and his followers.
10. Jaehui: They are all in Tae-ho's team? Then why did Tae-ho's team chase her?
11. Ji-hyung: To get her to be their team.
12. Jaehui: Really?
13. Hyun-sung: If you grab someone, that person becomes a member of your team.
14. Jun-hee: So we try to catch him [Tae-ho]
15. Ji-hyung: [Catching Tae-ho] would be cool.
(IT 10182005)

Thus chasing can reassign one to the wrong gender category. I see this as related to obtaining a powerful position and taking a correct position within the gender binary. So, being caught by chasers leads to a unhappy result: being subjected to the opposite gender.

The girls' lived experiences related to chasing varied according to their patterns of participation in it. Some of them carried deep-seated antagonistic feelings toward major chasers. They said things like, "I hate the very sight of them. Don't even talk to me about them" (FN 1005200504). They even mobilized into a girls' team. On the other hand, they went through the ritualized responses—long, exaggerated squawking sounds, laughing, taunting or running around school authorities (FN 1004200511). Some by-standers even romanticized it. Regardless of their distinctive ways of participating in chasing, most

girls agreed on the point that chasing revolves around the dichotomized gender category. The girls performed as oppositional beings. They seemed, however, to select different subject positions from the girls' team (Davies, 2003; Jones, 1996; Reay, 2001).

Several of the girls (So-jung, Ju-min, and Jun-hee) from Ms. Jung's class, who were regular participants, felt hostile and antagonistic toward the major chasers. Chasing was not, for them, playful. It was a serious violation of their bodies and minds initiated by boys. They responded by confronting "the boys' team." More specifically, some regular participants activate the gender dichotomy and even went beyond the stereotypical way of being a girl. Instead of succumbing to major chasers as helpless victims, the girls teamed up for a "real fight" with the boys and sought revenge (FN 1026200521). They wanted to "make the boys pay for what they did to us." Being more independent, active, and physically (somewhat) aggressive, So-jung, Ju-min, and Jun-hee led the girls' team and even had among their followers several boy classmates.

Chasing, however, was very amusing to girls like Yoon-su and Sung-woo. As Thorne (1993) points out, these girls, in contrast to the antagonistic girls, seemed to enjoy the romantic elements in chasing. The chased ran, but not at their fastest. As the chaser approached them, the girls ran to Ms. Jung or Ms. Shin or other adult members and asked them to "save them." Standing next to Ms. Shin, the girls' "guardian angel" (FN 1004200511), Yoon-su and Sung-woo smiled at the chaser who stayed back. These girls, I believe, were playing with the heterosexual cliché that a male chases a female. Contrary to their amusing response to boys, Yoon-su and Sung-woo explained themselves as victims of chasing by remarking exaggeratedly: "They kept bothering us" (FN

1004200515). Although Yoon-su and Sung-woo pointed out the gender binary in chasing, they performed distinctive girlhoods from So-jung, Ju-min and Jun-hee. Playfully taking the subject position as a girl who needs to be protected and saved by school authorities, the two girls took the subject position as heteronormative girls.

I have discussed the girls' practices related to Borderwork in order to describe their constructions of oppositional girlhood. Chasing from time to time brought to the surface strong emotions—within the girls being chased—that are not mentioned in Thorne's work. I witnessed their fear, anger, derogatory comments, and revenge. The girls' strong reaction to the major chasers can be partially explained by their previous experiences with the major chasers. According to Ms. Jung, a significant proportion of students in 5-and 6–year-old classes have had unfavorable experiences with one of the major chasers (RJ 10172005). Second, the violence of chasing caused girls' tense feelings toward the major chasers. Regardless of the girls' positions in chasing, they all complained about the boys' violence. Finally, I think that the constructed meaning of chasing in the local setting is a reason for the discrepancy between the girls' practices of chasing and that described by Thorne (1993). As I understand it, the chasing in the research setting was the result of compulsory positioning in an incorrect category. I think that the local meaning of chasing provoked the girls' strong emotional upset because being a member of the boys' team was not acceptable for girls who continuously maintained an oppositional gender position.

Girls' team.

Thorne (1993) calls a group of fifth- and sixth-grade girls who more assertively participated in or initiated chasing "a troupe" (p.72). This classification occurred in Ms. Jung's class as well. As mentioned before, several girls teamed up to take action against the major chasers on the playground. Instead of using Thorne's term, I will use their own term, the girls' team.[39]

The tension between the girls' and boys' team, in fact, outlasted the playground chasing. Comments like "I wish Min-ho [a major chaser] wasn't allowed in school because of chicken pox" (FN 0926200509), clearly reflected the antagonism. Not stopping at words, the girls' team boldly took revenge. They dug pitfalls for members of the boys' team to fall into (FN 1005200512) or did a drill of fast running and chasing for an upcoming "real fight" with the boys' team (FN 0927200505). Though their foe was the boys' team, they had not excluded actual boys from their team. The following vignette illustrates how revenge against the boys' team was taken.

So-jung and Jun-hee are digging a hole with shovels under a slide.

1. Jae-hui: What's this?
2. Jun-hee: It's a secret trap.
3. Jae-hui: A secret trap? Why are you making a trap?
4. So-jung: For revenge.
5. Jae-hui: Revenge? Towards who?
6. Jun-hee: Hyun-sung, Jae-won, and Sang-min.
7. Jae-hui: Why?
8. So-jung: Because they hit us
9. Jun-hee: But it's over.
10. Jae-hui: Why was it over?

[39] Sometimes the girls' team called itself "So-jung's team" following the name of one leader, or they called themselves the three (or four depending on the number of members) "musketeers".

11. So-jung: No I mean the hole. We gave up digging the hole..
12. Jae-hui: Did you give up on the revenge, too?
13. So-jung: No the revenge is still on.

Jun-hee and So-jung move to a different place and start digging a pitfall again. This time, several students join in.
. . .
14. Ju-min: Is this enough?
15. So-jung: No we have to dig all the way up to here.
16. Hae-in: Hey why don't you guys try making this, too.
17. Jun-hee: We don't have time to make those.
18. So-jung: Because we have to trap all three that attack us.
19. Ju-min: I wish those three would just disappear.
20. Jae-hui: Who do wish would disappear?
21. Jun-hee: Tae-ho Moon's team.
22. Jae-hui: Tae-ho?
23. So-jung: Tae-ho Moon.
24. Jae-hui: Tae-ho Moon? He's not even in Ms. Jung's class.
25. So-jung: But he annoys us. It's good that he's not here because he has chicken pox. Last time he had chicken pox didn't come to school. I'm glad he's not here because of chicken pox.
26. Jun-hee: He's the team leader.
27. Ju-min: Shiah Park is the second leader.
(FN 0926200505)

So-jung and Jun-hee were undertaking a bold action for "revenge" by digging their pitfall. As the pitfall became larger and larger, the girls' team became bigger and bigger. Finally, when the playground time was over, it had swollen to nine-members: seven girls and two boys (Sung-won and Dong-min). Whenever a student approached and asked what they are doing, So-jung and Jun-hee didn't hesitate to make it known. They also welcomed other girls who wanted to join the team and were quick to direct the digging. Interestingly, no one on the girls' team problematized the boys' switching of allegiances.

There could be several reasons why there were boys on the "girls' team." First, the common identity of the girls with the boys would scarcely cause them to object to

include boys. Because the major chasers were in different classrooms, the gender binary between the girls and the boys of Ms. Jung's class was more easily overlooked and collaboration more easily achieved. While the girls positioned themselves in opposition to some boys by organizing the girls' team, they had no problem collaborating with those in Ms. Jung's class. Second, the on-going relationship of a girl with a boy made the other girls accept them. For instance, Dong-min (boy) was allowed to join the team since he was the stable and steady dyadic partner of Tae-yun. Third, the dominant status of Jun-hee and So-jung among students of Ms. Jung's class explains the inclusiveness. The field notes demonstrate that both girls possessed the knowledge and power to organize a mixed gender group and successfully lead it. Finally, I argue that the girls' team resisted a particular type of masculinity: hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995) performed by the major chasers. So, some boys who didn't represent such masculinity were acceptable to the girls. The boys who joined the girls' team similarly expressed their unfavorable experiences with hegemonic masculine boys, saying they were also chased by the major chasers (IT 10182005). In other words, despite superficial opposition between the girls' and boys' teams, the girls' team established solidarity with boys who shared in the burden of hegemonic oppressive practices.

Girls' Crossing-Over the Gender Binary

Unlike the girls in Paley's (1984) study who were removed from the *Star Wars* narrative, the girls in this research setting took an active part in current Korean warrior narratives not only as passive viewers but as active players. Crossing the gender

boundary among young children via storylines from television programs was investigated by Corsaro and Molinory (2005). Marsh (2000) also observed girls' crossing the gender boundary by participating in warrior narratives. Both studies are very significant for highlighting how pop-culture narratives may generate in-between possibilities of being a girl or a boy. Along with these previous studies, I explore girls' crossing over the gender binary to understand how they resist the narrow subject position of being in opposition to the other.

Some girls from the class provided me an outline of popular cultural texts regarded as warrior narratives (e.g., *Powerforce*, *Mir-gaon*, and *Maple Story*).[40] Marsh (2000) clarifies narratives as "dominant ideological assumptions about categories of individuals and the relations between them" (Dyson, 1996, p,. 472, as cited in Marsh). Therefore, the girls' positioning of themselves within warrior narratives needs to be interpreted as their acceptance of or at least exploration of a non-typical way of being a girl. As discussed before, because prettiness is tied to girls' construction of appearance-based girlish girlhood, I limit this discussion to masculine warrior narratives. The following shows how girls engaged in the warrior narrative *Power digimon*.[41]

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[40] I here do not include female narratives such as *Berry Berry Muo Muo* or *Magic Girl Remi* [similar to *Sailor Moon*], even through the girls describe what female characters in the narratives do as fighting. The decision is made because those stories are talked about among the girls in the research setting with a focus on how "pretty" the magic power girls are (FN 1007200507).

[41] *Power digimon* originally titled as *Digital Monster*, is in the same school as *Pocket Monster* (Kim, H. J., 2002). As a result of an analysis of eight popular animation series selected by Korean children, Kim, H. J (2002) states that *Power digimon* appears to show more diverse types of female-male relations, non-stereotypical female characters, and fewer sexual biases.

When she sees me walking to a pavilion from a swing, Tae-yun, sitting under the slide, calls me.

1. Tae-yun: Come here, Ms. Yoon, and play with me.
2. Jae-hui: (*approaching Tae-yun*) What are you making?
3. Tae-yun: (*holding a funnel on the ground and pouring wet sand through a blue plastic funnel*) You can pour black sand [wet sand] or white sand [dry sand] into here. Then when you do like this (*holding the funnel above the ground*), and sand comes out.

While Tae-yun and I play together, Dong-min (boy) comes up to us.
4. Dong-min: (*standing next to Tae-yun*) We are doing . . . Are you going to play with us?
5. Tae-yun: (*looking up*) No. (*pouring sand into the funnel*) I am going to join later.
6. Dong-min: (*walking away to other boys*) There is a girl [character].
7. Tae-yun: (*looking at Dong-min and raising her voice*) OK. Wait a minute. Are you going to do that *Digimon*?
8. Dong-min: We are going to play *Power Digimon* [a cartoon similar to *Pokemon*].
9. Tae-yun: (speaking loudly to Dong-min running away from her) Hey. Um. . . I am going to play Nari [a female character in *Power Digimon*]. Remember. I will join later.

After Dong-min goes to some other boys, Tae-yun lingers to play with me for a while. . . .

10. Tae-yun: (*putting her shovel on the ground*) Would it be O.K. with you if I stopped playing?
11. Jae-hui: Me? Are you saying...? Do you want to play *Digimon* with them?
12. Tae-yun: Yes.
13. Jae-hui: Well, you can go ahead and play. I am O.K.

Tae-yun asks me to keep her hair band and runs to Dong-min and the other boys. Until Ms. Jung calls the class, Tae-yun spends time with the boys. (FN1018200531)

Dong-min, an expert on warrior narratives, informed Tae-yun, another authority on warrior narratives, of his plan to play *Power Digimon*. Instead of immediately accepting, Tae-yun expressed only mild interest. Her seeming indifference, I think, was out of

consideration for me. Because she invited me to play with her, it is hard for her to immediately abandon me. When Dong-min promised a female character, Tae-yun's interest was hooked. Tae-yun asked about Dong-min's plan again and then promised to join by claiming the role of Nari, the female character. She even admonished Dong-min, as he walked away, not to forget that she'll be playing later. Before long, Tae-yun got fidgety and asked whether I would mind if she left. On getting my assurance, Tae-yun was gone, joining Dong-min's group to play Nari.

Tae-yun was one girl who frequently joined warrior narratives with boys, especially when Dong-min was present. Compared to her submissive roles such as a baby or a student in domestic themes with other girls (FN 1031200523), she seemed to be dominant or to at least raise her voice in warrior narratives (FN 1024200528). Tae-yun's expertise distinguished her in terms of both her frequency and style in warrior narratives. She was not, however, the only girl who got in on warrior narratives. Other girls, Min-ju, Na-young, You-jin, and Hae-in, could sometimes be seen enacting warrior narratives. Min-ju and Na-young elaborated on the reason for their frequently exclusive playing with each other and the difference of their play from other girls. According to Min-ju and Na-young, while they enjoyed playing *Mir-gaon* over Greek Myth plays, other girls usually "do only what they don't like" or "don't know how to play what they like" (IT 11142005). None of the girls, in spite of frequently playing in warrior narratives, demonstrated "gender bending" (Blaise, 2005). That is, none ever played a male character.

Girls of Ms. Jung's class had "opportunities to move beyond the stereotypical framework, operating in the highly gendered world" (Marsh, 2000, p. 219). But the girls'

positions within warrior narratives were diverse in terms of participation frequency, types, and levels. The vignette that appeared in Chapter one demonstrates girls' experiences in warrior narratives. Insisting on the role of a princess, a guardian for Power forces according to Dong-min, Yoon-su performed as a girl in charge of her subordinates. Yoon-su within the storyline of *Powerforce* obtained power to direct where Power forces were supposed to be and what Power forces were supposed to do. Moreover, Yoon-su as the princess of Power forces protected them by her informing them of coming danger. I believe that by inserting themselves into warrior narratives which offered a variety of ways of being, the girls crossed over the gender binary and experiences which were almost unseen in their lived practices.

Role-playing is not the only way in which these girls participated in warrior narratives. As viewers and consumers they engaged with masculine cultural texts (Jordan & Cowan, 1995, MacNaughton, 1994; Marsh, 2000; Paley, 1984). Also, many girls were involved in warrior narratives as viewers, though some were passive and sporadic. For instance, Tae-yun and Min-ju had knowledge of cultural texts celebrating hegemonic masculinity. Tae-yun told me about how she watched *Powerforce* daily and let me know what channel I could watch it on (FN0902200507). As well, Min-ju gracefully presented her knowledge about *Maple Story* in giving the right answers to consecutive questions from Ji-hoon (boy) who tried to "find out whether she really knows about [*Maple Story*]" (FN 1101200543).

For a variety of reasons—disconnection of cable, parents' decisions, and time schedules—not every girl in the research setting was allowed to watch warrior narratives

that are on TV. Both So-jung and Sei-young are girls who, because of their involvement in extracurricular activities, scarcely watched warrior narratives on TV. Nevertheless, they still managed to have a toy that is tied in to those narratives (FN1103100501). Aggressive marketing strategies of toy companies invite girls to consume various types of cultural texts. Living in a highly advanced consumer society, the girls participated in warrior narratives through purchasing commercialized items. Notwithstanding the prevalence of girls' toys, several girls disclosed that they had some character items from a warrior narrative. One day, So-jung smuggled a deck of *Powerforce* cards to class and gave them to her team members, avoiding Ms. Jung's eye (FN 1118200528). I had several chances to learn about the girls' crossing-over preferences for play themes/materials in group interviews. In more private settings, I learned of some girls owning boys' play materials and/or having an indifference to Barbie:

> Several students are sitting on an art table and playing with play dough.
>
> 1. Jaehui: I have something to ask you guys. A couple of days ago, somebody mentioned that there were girls' toys. Do also you think that there are toys just for girls?
> 2. Na-young: Yes.
> 3. Jae-hui: What kinds of toys are for girls?
> 4. Tae-yun: Things like JuJu Dolls or Barbies?
> 5. Jae-hui: Do you believe that Barbies and JuJus are girls' toys? Do you have a Barbie or JuJu (*a fashion doll produced in Korea*)?
> 6. You-jin: I have a Barbie doll.
> 7. Na-young: Um… I have both JuJu and Barbie. I bought them a long time ago. But I don't often play with them anymore.
> 8. Minju: I have a lot of boys' toys instead of girls' toys.
> 9. Jaehui: Toys for boys? What kind of toys are those?
> 10: Na-young: I have toy from Mir-gaon [a Korean children's drama] and a little Mion [a male character from the drama] and a little Ara [a female character from the drama].
> (FN 1013200526)

Barbie, the most popular product among girls, was called a girls' toy without room for argument. Na-young, however, disrupted the scene by citing a disinterest in playing with Barbie: "I don't play with them much anymore." Going one step further than Na-young, Min-ju admitted she has "a lot of" boy materials and "not so many girls' toys." Na-young and Min-ju then elaborated on what boys' toys they have. Although both of them categorized materials from the TV show as for boys, they reported owning some of them. I would claim that Na-young and Min-ju take ambiguous positions in-between gender categories by purchasing cultural products that are socially and culturally designed for boys. The practice of positioning oneself in warrior narratives complicates the currently legitimized girlhoods and dismantles the absoluteness of the gender binary.

The girls of the local classroom construct and are constructed in-between girlhoods, I would claim, by participating in warrior narratives as players, viewers, and consumers. Corsaro and Molinari (2005) state the influences of pop-culture scripts in young children's gender construction as:

> . . . the children embellished and extended the traditional gender scripts by stretching or plying the adult role frame. This plying of the frame gave the children more control over it and enabled them to move the play in directions that fit certain concerns of the peer culture. (p. 51)

In one pop culture narrative, girls may take alternative subject positions, which are hardly allowed them in their daily realities. I believe girls' participation in warrior narratives complicates and multiplies the constructed girlhoods in opposition to boys in the research setting. It is ultimately a resistance to the dichotomized gender. I did not observe any

gender bending (Blaise, 2005) or tomboys (Thorne, 1993; Reay, 2001) in the local setting, two representative femininities widely regarded as girls' resistance to traditional femininity. Nonetheless, I think the girls of Ms. Jung's class generated a space in which they could be somewhere between the gender polarities by playing, viewing, and consuming warrior narratives. Within warrior narratives, the girls moved beyond the stereotypical subject position as girls endorsed within the gender binary system from context to context.

Summary

I have addressed girls' constructions of oppositional girlhood within the gender binary that occurred in the research setting. The girls' separation from boys at different levels and in different contexts cropped up as they correctly positioned themselves within the gender binary. First, the girls organized their classroom practices in opposition to boys by locating themselves as distant from boys, making gendered choices in indoor free-choice activity, and categorizing play themes and/or play materials according to gender. Ambiguous or vague positions between the binary categories provoked category maintenance work in the research setting. Thus, some girls who correctly positioned themselves in the gender binary exercised power in coercing other girls to behave according to the appropriate side of the gender binary. In addition, the girls activated the gender binary and organized groups opposite to boys: borderwork (Thorne, 1993). I closely examined girls' lived practice related to borderwork—contest, chasing and girls' team.

Although the local girlhoods were formed by and contributed to maintaining the gender binary, data gathered from participant observation and interviews suggest crossing-over practices. Many girls of Ms. Jung's class brought warrior narratives to their classroom practices. They were players, viewers, and consumers of warrior narratives, such as *Powerforce*, *Mir-gaon*. Some girls of Ms. Jung's class, as illustrated above, overtly and tacitly stretched their performance of girlhood beyond the narrow space given to them by the gender binary by participating in warrior narratives. I would argue that their participation in certain pop culture texts that are seen as masculine complicates their constructed girlhood in opposition to boys in kindergarten.

Girls' Constructions of Heteronormative Girlhood

Several scholars (Cannella, 1997; Robinson & Díaz, 2006; Silin, 1995; Tobin, 2000; Walkerdine, 1990) recognize that young children have been little discussed in terms of sexuality. Walkerdine (1990) argues that ECE practices are based on an assumption that children are "hygienic, sanitized and desexualized" (p. 120). However, as I stayed longer in Ms. Jung's class, I began to notice the pervasive heteronormativity (Robinson & Díaz, 2006). Indeed, heterosexuality was naturalized and normalized in the girls' lived practices. The following is an example of what caught my attention:

> *Ms. Jung's class is heading to the classroom from a gym at the first floor. So-jung, Ju-min, Sung-woo and Ji-hoon (boy) are in the line.*
>
> 1.Sung-woo: (*rocking slightly from side to side and smiling*) I've decided who I'm going to marry when I grow up.
> 2.So-jung: (*turning to look at Sung-woo*) You might not meet him later.
> 3. Ji-hoon: Who, Jun-sung Lee?

> 4. Sung-woo: Yup (*answering to Ji-hoon and turning to So-jung*). Young-jun Lee is going to go to preschool – I mean preschool – I mean what's wrong with me – H elementary school later on [after graduation]. (FN0912200509)

Sung-woo envisioned her future as a wife by proclaiming a future husband, and articulated being within a heterosexual relationship. Though So-jung raised the possibility that Sung-woo might not meet her future husband, she in no way challenged the idea of her eventually being a wife. After So-jung's remark to Sung-woo, Ji-hoon (boy) also asked Sung-woo whether she was going to marry Young-jun. Nonetheless, Ji-hoon's furtive question seemed to need no answer. It merely intimated that he knew of her romantic interests in Young-jun. Sung-woo affirmed Ji-hoon's assumption and then insisted that there was nothing to worry about because she knew what school her future husband would be attending. I interpret this vignette as Sung-woo and So-jung's collective constructions of their heteronormative girlhood. The exchange strikes me as a classic example of a construction of heteronormative girlhoods by participating in marriage talk.

By participating in various activities embracing heterosexual romance/love, the girls constitute and are constituted by heteronormative girlhoods. In order to conceptualize heteronormative practices in early childhood, I rely on Rich's (1980) idea of heterosexuality, which states that it is not mere sexual preference or choice but "a political institution" (p. 637) that perpetuates male dominance over females and imposes, manages, organizes, propagandizes, and maintains ideology. Robinson and Díaz (2006) insist that "the socially constructed cultural binary of heterosexual us/homosexual them" normalizes and institutionalizes heterosexuality. Under the normalized heterosexuality,

taking a subject position related to heterosexual romance/love is legitimized as the one and only way of being a female.

Applying Rich's idea of heterosexuality to girls' experiences in Ms. Jung's class makes heteronormativity visible in early childhood. Based on similar conceptualizations of heterosexuality, several scholars have conducted cutting-edge works (Blaise, 2005; Connolly, 2000; Davies 2003; Robinson & Díaz, 2006). Blaise (2005) investigates gender discourses operating within the heterosexual matrix in an American kindergarten classroom. Aydt and Corsaro (2003) investigate preschoolers' involvement in "marriage talk" that includes marriage, love, babies, and the sexes. Connolly (2000) cites the dominance of heterosexuality in South Asian early childhood girls in an English primary school. Oh, K. H. (2005) mentions Korean young children's romantic interest in peers while they socialize gender in early childhood settings. Taking its place in the on-going discussions of early childhood girls and heteronormativity, this section discusses Korean girls' constructions of girlhood as heteronormative beings in a kindergarten class. The following points are highlighted: 1) the pervasiveness of romance in a range of cultural texts used in the research setting, 2) the normalization of marriage, 3) the girls' claiming of the subject position of being a girlfriend, 4) girls' romanticization of girl-boy relations, and girls' romanticization of male violence.

"You're So Lovable": Girls' (Re) Reading of Romance or Marriage

Numerous cultural texts were circulated in Ms. Jung's class throughout data collection. Some of them were selected by Ms. Jung for pedagogical reasons (storybooks,

songs, video clips, and worksheets); some of them were brought by members of the class (comics, storybooks, songs, movies, and dramas from TV). Some were created intentionally for children while others were not. The majority embraced elements of heterosexual romance or marriage. By (re) reading circulated texts in a classroom and by positioning themselves in fantasy and imagination of cultural texts, the girls constituted and were constituted by heteronormative girlhoods. The girls carefully read the texts, built meanings, and then discussed what was possible and desirable with their peers (Davies, 2003).

Romance/love is one of the most frequently discussed themes in various types of cultural texts (Lambs, 2001; Lees, 1993; Walkerdine, 1990). Lees (1993) suggests that romance/love has been naturalized as one of "the most fulfilling experiences of our lives" (p. 105) through the consistent and repeated creation of cultural texts about it. Children in the research setting would enthusiastically bring cultural texts from their homes; some of them (e.g., movies, Korean pop songs, or dramas from TV) were not intended for children. The texts and thus the classroom came to be suffused with heterosexuality. The wedding scene from *The Sound of Music*, voted best scene from the movie, was talked about with sighs of yearning for Maria's beautiful bridal gown (FN 1121200528); they even selected the wedding scene as the best scene from the movie. TV shows from the night before were frequent topics of conversation (FN0923200530). When the girls of Ms. Jung's class reviewed a show, they focused on the change in romantic relations between the main characters.

Korean pop songs were cultural texts frequently drawn on. Three songs were repeatedly sung at the art or snack table: all of them explicitly representing romance/love. One, "You're so So Lovable," expresses the thrill of love and admiration for a girlfriend who is lovable "from your head to your toe":

> You're so lovable from your head to your toes
> I'm so proud to have you as my girl
> The wait is enjoyable and even the air feels new
> This is how much I love you. . .

As one of the girls started humming a song while drawing a picture at the art table, the rest joined in. Mimicking perfectly the intonations of the singers, the girls actively recirculated the embraced meaning of the cultural text: delights of romance. Ignoring Ms. Jung's encouragement to sing a song for children in the classroom, the girls continued to sing in low voices. Singing a song like "You're So Lovable," is the girls' engagement with the heteronormative culture in which romance/love was valued, valorized, and yearned for.

Romance/love does not appear in cultural texts exclusively for adults. Some cultural texts purposely written for young children also propagate the same message to young girls (Davies, 2003; Rich, 1980). In spite of their sanitary quality, children's stories still include romantic elements (Lamb, 2001; Walkerdine; 1990). Walkerdine argues that these cultural texts "serve to prepare the ground for the insertion of the little girl into romantic heterosexuality" by producing the "girls' conscious and unconscious desire for . . . a 'happy-ever-after' situation" (1990, p. 88). Children's books promote heteronormativity more subtly in their descriptions of heteronormative families. The dominance of the heteronormative family in children's books is reported by Cho, J. R.' s

(2000) study to attempt to find out sex-role stereotypes in children's books published in Korea—including translated books. She notes that most female characters in these books are wives taking care of family and bringing-up children.

The students often brought texts from children's pop culture and shared them with their peers. With less strict screening or critical discussion from the gender point of view, Ms. Jung allowed them to read these texts at the book center. While the students participated in current pop culture in the classroom, the romance/love embedded in those texts was circulated in Ms. Jung's class. Sung-jin (a boy) brought a popular comic, *Maple Story* (FN1027200514). For the week it was available it was the most frequently read. Its story is a stereotypical heroic narrative in which an ordinary boy through adversity becomes a hero. Although the comic book is a story of adventure, friendship, and bravery, it also includes romance. A male character falls in love with a female character at first sight.

> Min-ju reads the *Maple Story* at a desk at the Book Center. When Yu-jin asks Min-ju for the book after she is done, Min-ju suggests they read it together. Yu-jin sits next to Min-ju and starts to read. The scene both girls are reading is about the first encounter of the ordinary boy with a princess who has been looking for a warrior to save her empire.
>
> 1. Min-ju: (*reading the dialog balloons*) She's so pretty. (*To Yu-jin*) I think she's pretty, too.
> 2. Yu-jin: I think she's pretty, too. And then?
> 3. Min-ju: (*reading the dialogue aloud*) Koohahaha!! Tears are coming down (*turning the page and to You-jin in her normal voice*) Maybe he's crying because the girl is so pretty? (*changing her voice tone*) Rumble rumble…I have never seen any girl look so pretty. How can someone be this pretty? This is so not fair.
>
> Min-ju and You-jin turn the page. Min-ju is still reading aloud
> . . .

> 6. Min-ju: (*reading the comic to You-jin*) I'm going to – I wonder if she's a princess under a wicked witch's spell? Save the princess. I won't even budge!
> (FN 1101200510)

The above vignette shows that the two girls' reading of romance appeared in a cartoon for children. In particular, Min-ju displayed a keen interpretation of the pictorial clue of romance in the text. Based on the heart-shaped eyes of the boy, Min-ju detected, based on his heart shaped eyes, a boy character's romantic feelings for the pretty princess (IN11012005). Min-ju observed in an interview (IT 1125200505), that the boy in the text fell in love with a girl due to her pretty appearance, "[I know] because he said pretty to her." In reading the comic and interpreting the embraced theme of romantic practices, Min-ju constituted heteronormative girlhood.

Like in *Maple Story*, romance/love is integral to many cultural texts for young children. All of the much admired princesses from the Disney Kingdom are ultimately rewarded for enduring adversity—rewarded, that is, by becoming brides of princes. As Davies (2003) observes, "the romantic juxtaposition of love with marriage" (p. 77) penetrates even children's pop culture. These cultural texts discursively normalize a girl within the heterosexual relationship and marginalize alternative ways of being a female. Through reproducing such narratives in their daily practices, girls are constructed and construct themselves as partners of males.

In looking at a classroom, I have pointed out the pervasiveness of heteronormativity (Robinson & Díaz, 2006; Walkerdine, 1990). The data point out that a broad range of cultural texts infuse heterosexual romance into young children's lives and constantly promote heteronomativity in the research setting. Enjoying the emotional and

aesthetic pleasures given by the cultural texts, the young girls also engaged with the embedded heteronormative messages. Furthermore, in drawing on certain cultural texts and (re)reading those with peers in the classroom, the girls established the local heteronormative culture.

"Everybody Gets Married Except for Beggars": Girls' Normalization of Marriage

Marriage, described as the happy ending of romance, was a common theme in the classroom. Maria's wedding scene in *The Sound of Music* was more often reviewed than the picnic in the hills (IT11212005). The girls enthusiastically talked about experiences outside kindergarten which were permeated by marriage as did the young children in Aydt and Corsaro (2003). Experiences of being flower girls prompted long conversations about wedding ceremonies (FN 1128200508).

Some girls in the research setting positioned themselves as future wives by telling others that they had already selected a future spouse from their class, saying, "I've decided who I'm going to marry" (FN0912200509). Other girls did not raise an issue other than to point out the possibility that the future bride may not ever see the future groom again after graduation shown on page 262. In the research setting, where romance/marriage was implicitly and explicitly exalted, the girls normalized marriage as the legitimate way of being a heteronormative female. The majority of girls in the research setting tended to perceive marriage as something that "everyone" should experience. The following vignette demonstrates that girls negotiate marriage as the only way of being human.

Yu-na and Yoon-su are sitting next to each other on the bus to a fieldtrip.As the bus passes a wedding chapel on its way to the museum, Yoon-soo turns to Yu-na.

1. Yoon-soo: (*Pointing out the window*) I've been there.
2. Yu-na: I was there, too, for my aunt's wedding.
3. Yoon-soo: Of course, because everyone gets married.
4. Yu-na: Nuh-uh, some people don't get married
5. Yoon-soo: No, everybody gets mairred except for beggars.
6. Yu-na: (*As I turn around to watch them, Yu-na asks me*) Teacher, there are people who don't get married, aren't there?
7. Jaehui: Of course. Some people get married and some people don't.
8. Yu-na: (*To Yoon-soo*) Told you so.
9. Yoon-soo: (*No response and turning her gaze to outside of window*)
10. Yu-na: Ms. Yoon, are you married?
11. Jaehui: Nope. I haven't gotten married, either.
12. Yu-na: You should get married.
13. Jaehui: Why?
14. Yu-na: Because . . . it's a good thing to do.

(FN1021200518)

Yoon-su, who clearly understood heteronormative relationships, frequently interpolated heteronormative practice into Ms. Jung's class (FN 0927200511). The conversation began with descriptions of Yoon-su's experience at a wedding ceremony the previous weekend. Yu-na responded with a similar experience of her own. Yoon-su, revealing her construction as a heteronormative being, reasoned that it must be because everyone gets married. In doing so, Yoon-su displayed the generalization of marriage as the way of life for "everyone." At the same time, she revealed her construction as a heteronormative being.

Mentioning people who choose not to get married, however, Yu-na opposed Yoon-su's generalization of marriage. From my interpretation, Yu-na denied marriage as the one and only way to live and, furthermore, indirectly suggested that it is a matter of

choice not obligation. . Confronted by Yu-na, Yoon-su reasserted her point that marriage is the normative practice by adding a qualifier—only beggars remain unmarried. By offering the fringe of society as the exception to marriage, Yoon-su suggested that life without marriage goes hand-in-hand with impoverishment. From my interpretation, Yoon-su saw marriage belonging to the norm and non-marriage belonging to the fringe. Stimulated by Yoon-su's counterargument, Yu-na marshalled support from me. With my support, Yu-na was able to counter Yoon-su normalization of marriage.

What Yu-na said to Yoon-su hinted at her detached attitude toward marriage as the normative practice for everyone. Despite Yu-na's agreement with Yoon-su, Yu-na did not position outside heteronormativity. The above conversation between Yu-na and me demonstrates how her positioning is complicated by her assessment of desirability of other ways of being a female in/outside the compulsory heterosexuality. I believe that her contradictory ideas suggest the multiplicities in girls' constructions of girlhood. Although Yu-na rejected Yoon-su's sweeping generalization, she seemed to perceive marriage as a more desirable practice. After she learned of my marital status, she promptly encouraged me to get married. Yu-na's inconsistency, I maintain, cannot be related to a reflection of immaturity. Rather, I think that this reflects complicated and multiple ways of being a female in modern Korean society. A life outside marriage definitely became a "doable," possible, and recognizable way of being for Yu-na. However, based on what Yu-na said to me, it would not necessarily be good and desirable for her. Being a wife in Yu-na's perspective is better than the alternatives. Telling me that marriage would be good for me, I think that Yu-na perceived my life

outside marriage as something that needed be corrected or changed. In other words, it signified her distance from my way of being female. Encouraging me to follow the normalized way of being a female, Yu-na performed her heteronormative girlhood constructions.

Throughout data collection, I often became an object of discussion in terms of heteronormativity. I think that this is because, contrary to the other adult members in Ms. Jung's class, I was regarded as deviant due to my marital status. Therefore, the girls who normalized marriage marginalized my way as a single person of performing gender. More aggressively than Yu-na, Sei-young also problematized my marital status. From Sei-young's perspective, there were only two possibilities for a mature female like me: marriage or divorce. After a couple of questions about my personal life, Sei-young learned that I was single but lived away from family; she threw me a final, denouncing question, "Ms. Yoon. Are you divorced?" (FN 1005200518).

Sei-young saw the single life as abnormal. In this context, Sei-young's subject position within heteronormativity might have been more dominant than my own, in spite of my superior age, body size, education, etc. Relying on the more dominant subject position, Sei-young passed judgment on and was suspicious about my subject position. After a speechless moment, I gave detailed reasons for living separately from my family; I didn't explain why I decided to live a single life. It looked like I was cataloging excuses in order to avoid being devalued and marginalized by another girl.

The data concerning the girls' generalization of marriage suggest the fact that the girls normalized marriage in the broader culture. In other words, these girls energetically

created a heteronormative culture in the kindergarten class by desiring, valuing, and talking about marriage. Often, some of them spoke of themselves as future wives. Taking up subject positions as wives, the girls normalized marriage as being for "everybody." Upon this locally normalized way of being, the girls exercised regulatory and controlling power over the deviant modes they saw in my being single. Nevertheless, the girls' heteronormative practices were interrupted in the research setting. Yu-na's argument with Yoon-su is just one example. The class discussion of homosexual marriage also complicated girls' constructions of girlhood as heteronormative beings.

Ready to be a Girlfriend: Girls' Claim of the Subject Position of Girlfriend

The previous two sections mention girls' (re)reading of romance/love in cultural texts and girls' normalization of marriage. I now explore girls' constructions of girlhood as heteronormative by focusing on their claim of the girlfriend subject position in Ms. Jung's class. Although the girls in the research setting barely performed their gender in mutual girlfriend-boyfriend relationships, I think that this term can be used in describing a girl's desire to position herself in heteronormativity. In the research setting, the girls in numerous ways were constituted by and constituted their subject positions as girlfriends. The girls sometimes presented themselves as subjects who desired a boyfriend or as objects who were desired by boys.

"We can't get married now.": The binary of child/adult.

Even in a heteronormative society, early childhood children are not fully allowed to participate in heteronormative practices. Thorne (1993) points out the expanding extent to which children perform gender as "sexual or at least romantic actors" (p. 151) as they enter their teens. In the research setting, some girls understood the prohibition, other than talk, from early participation in heterosexual (romantic) practices. Because of restrictions placed on them, the girls devalued other girls' practices as heterosexual beings. One girl was criticized for kissing a boy (FN 0929200502). Min-ju and Na-young devalued other girls' constructions of themselves as girls having a desire for romance. This vignette is taken from a conversation between Na-young and Min-ju (FN0906200518) at an art center.

> The day after visiting the Agriculture Museum, the children recall their trip and draw what they experienced. Min-ju and Na-young are drawing next to each other on the snack table. On the art table to the side, the girls are singing "You Were Born to Be Loved."
>
> 1. Min-ju: (*Picking out a marker from a box in the middle of the table*) We need to love while we're young.
> 2. Na-young: Why bother? We can't even get married right now.
> 3. Min-ju: (*As she starts drawing*) We can't get married now. So we have to love when we get married.
> 4. Na-young: How can a kid and a kid get married?
> 5. Min-ju: (Agreeing with Na-young' words) That's true, I'm not even in love right now… Hey I'm going to draw a square.
> The two compare their drawings and continue to draw.
> (FN 0906200518)

Min-ju and Na-young demonstrated an accurate awareness of young children's exclusion from heteronormative practice based on the binary of child/adult. Indicating the proper time for love and marriage—although Min-ju said "young," I assume she meant one's

twenties—Min-ju disapproved of other girls' constructions of themselves as heteronormative beings. Na-young also stood with Min-ju and highlighted the prohibition of certain heterosexual practices for young children like them. In doing this, Min-ju and Na-young distanced themselves from other girls who were reenacting a cultural text about love. As indicated earlier, the two had maintained a strong bond with one another since they were 3-year-olds. Where they had a relatively reliable and safe support system, I think, the girls were able to interrupt the dominant idea of love and marriage. Firmly grounded in the subject position of children, both girls repudiated other girls' capacities or eligibilities to participate in heterosexual practices and interrupt their heteronormative girlhood. I argue that Min-ju and Na-young's subject position as children operated as a possibility and simultaneously as a limitation. Their subject position as children allowed them to subvert the heteronormative girlhood, but limited them as children being controlled and regulated by adults.

"He said he likes me.": Girls' claim of the subject position of girlfriend.

A more inclusive part of the literature on broad age groups of girls theorizes that girls' construct heteronormative gender through claiming a subject position of being a girlfriend (Adler & Adler, 1998; Renold, 2000, 2006; Lees, Hey,). Relying only on studies done with older girls (due to a scarcity of literature on early childhood girls), this section scrutinizes the girls' claims of the subject position of girlfriends. In doing this, my primary interest is not to investigate whether or not a 5- or 6-year-old girl has a boyfriend in a reciprocal relationship. The point I want to highlight is that a girl in the research

setting is constructed and constructs herself as a heteronormative being by positioning herself in the girlfriend subject position.

In exploring girls' constructions as a girlfriend, it is necessary to clarify several things. First, although I perceive girls' pretend play enacting a domestic theme as one type of heteronormative practice in kindergarten similar to Blaise (2005) and Connolly (2000), I specifically select data that were observed out of a framework of play. This is because I intend to keep the perspectives of children in the here-and-now in describing their participation in romantic relations. Like Tobin (2000) and Renold (2006), I do not perceive girls' practices as the rehearsal of future practices as heteronormative females. Second, girls' constructions of themselves as heteronormative beings appeared in limited ways, mostly in mere talking about boys or their own feelings. Other than this, the girls scarcely behaved in a way suggestive of romantic relations with or interest in boys. Renold (2006) observes a similar pattern of girls' construction of gender in primary school students in the U.K. I would interpret the girls' limited practice in relation to socially established appropriateness with respect to heteronormative practices according to age (Thorne, 1993).

In the research setting, girls participated in heteronormative practices by clarifying their subject positions as girlfriends who desire and are desired by boyfriends. Many idiosyncratic terms were used to describe their subject position as girlfriends. For instance, some of them unabashedly admitted to "having boyfriends." Responding to whether a boy is her boyfriend, girls like Sei-young didn't draw themselves back but insisted on a girlfriend and boyfriend relationship (FN0901200516). Just like Sung-woo,

who appeared on page 262, some talked about their future husbands. Sometimes, girls called their romantic relations with boys "being a couple," which is the term dominantly used to designate a romantic pair in Korea. Regardless of how the girls described their romantic relations, these girls claimed the subject position of girlfriend and displayed their positioning within heteronormtivity.

Yoon-su was one of the girls determinedly claiming the girlfriend position as the subject of desire. One day she brought a folded pink paper in her hand to class. Ms. Shin, an assistant teacher, asked her what the paper was for (FN1103200504). Yoon-su answered that it was a present for her boyfriend in her neighborhood and she was going to give it to him after school—her boyfriend is a first grader. Then she opens the paper and reads to me:

> Heart. Heart. Heart. Heart. Star. Star. Star. Star. Star. I love you. Yoon-bae Oh-Bba.[42] This is a present for you. To Yoon-bae-Oh-Bba. From Yoon-su. (folding the paper again and saying) I will marry him.
> (FN1103200504)

The letter is notably romantic not just in content but in style, too. She chose pink stationery and decorated the outside and inside of the letter with hearts and star shapes, colored with bright pink and other pastels. Sticking to the romantic cliché of pink and hearts, Yoon-su revealed her knowledge about romantic expression. Yoon-su performed

[42] "Oh-Bba" signifies an older brother in a family. However, it is used as a designation of a male partner within heterosexual relationships. When a girl is younger than her male partner, she calls her male partner "Oh-bba." For instance, Yoon-su calls a boy playing a dad as "Oh-bba" in pretend play. According to her, her mom calls her dad "Oh-bba."

her gender as a heteronormative being in a more active way: making a present and expressing her affection. This distinguishes her construction of heteronormative girlhood.

Most girls in the research setting, however, were constructed by and constructed heteronormative girlhoods through claiming, and not acting on, a girlfriend position. Soo-jin was one. Her interest in Jae-won, who was popular school-wide according to the girls (IT10132005), is well documented. Girls voiced their admiration of his good looks at a snack table. "Wow. What a good looking boy Jae-won is." (FN1107200520). His good looks accounted for Soo-jin's romantic interests in him. Min-ju accounted likewise for her romantic feelings toward Jung-hoon (a boy in another class). According to Min-ju, he looked like Eros from Greek mythology (FN 1013200531), her favorite storybook.

In contrast to her expression of romantic feeling, Soo-jin did not often spend time with Jae-won. Data collected related to Soo-jin clearly indicates her attention to Jae-won. She got jealous when other girls invited him to their houses (FN 1118200550). She said that she lost interest in mom play when he said that he would no longer participate in it (FN 1116200516). Nonetheless, only a couple of times did I observe them pretend play together in or outside the classroom. Such tentativeness could be found among most girls who claimed their girlfriend subject position in the research setting. As far as my observation, excepting a couple of incidents, girls in the research setting exclusively performed heteronormative girlhood in emotionally charged talk: whom they liked, why they liked him, who was part of a couple, and whom they would marry.

Claiming the subject position of girlfriend, girls in the research setting produced and maintained romance in constructing girlhoods (Renold, 2006). Showing themselves

to be subject to romantic desire, the girls consistently positioned themselves as girlfriends. Showing themselves to be objects of romantic desire, some girls displayed their heteronormative girlhoods by claiming to be desired by boys. You-jin declared, "You know what? Chris [a Korean boy], from my English institution, said that he will marry me" (FN1114200517). [43] Telling me about the boy who was romantically connected to her, You-jin presented herself as his girlfriend. From her seriousness, her boastful tone, and her complete lack of reservation, I was aware of her delight and pleasure at being desired by a boy, at being someone's "girlfriend."[44] The following vignette shows a girl's construction of heteronormative girlhood through being positioned as a girlfriend to a boy.

> All the children have walked down the stairs, but Tae-yun and Young-jun stop in the middle of the stairs to have a brief conversation and then climb down. I am waiting at the end of the line for everyone to climb down safely.
>
> 1. Tae-yun: Ms. Yoon.
> 2. Jaehui: Hmm?
> 3. Tae-yun: (*pushing the front of his unzipped jacket towards me*) Can you do this for me?
> 4. Jaehui: (*Bending down to help with the zipper*) What did Young-jun say?
> 5. Tae-yun: He said he likes me.
> 6. Jaehui: Really?
> 7. Tae-yun: Yes, but I don't like him.
> 8. Jaehui: (Straightening) You don't really like him?
> 9. Tae-yun: I already have someone else I like. He is older than I am and I want to marry him. (*Walking toward the children who have begun to cross over to the cabbage patch*) I don't like Young-jun.
> (FN 1121200513)

[43] According to You-jin, everybody at the institution chooses an English name.

[44] Field notes allow me to infer that boys in the research setting also participate in romantic practices. Boys talk with their peers about girls in whom they're romantically interested (FN 0916200520). I mostly think the lack of data about boys' participation in heterosexual romantic practice is caused by my focus on girls.

Regardless of accepting or rejecting Young-jun's attention, Tae-yun participated in heteronormative practices as a desired girl and as an object of romantic interest. However, by spurning his attention and claiming a different boyfriend, Tae-yun positioned herself as subject to desire.

Many studies on various age groups of girls have already reported being a girlfriend as one aspect of girls' constructions of gender (Connolly, 2000; Hey, 1997; Lees, 1993; Oh, K. H., 2005; Renold, 2000, 2006). Among the studies, only two discuss heteronormative practice among young children. Connolly (2000), in a similar thread regarding the predominance of heterosexuality in girls' gender identity, states that involvement in heterosexual relations offers a girl higher status and more influence. Similarly, Oh, K. H. (2005) mentions Korean young children's romantic interests in peers in early childhood settings. Some findings of her study indicate girls' involvement in romantic practices as a girlfriend. Data collected and analyzed suggest that girls of Ms. Jung's class position themselves and are positioned in the subject position of girlfriend. And in Ms. Jung's class the girls publicize their intimacy with certain boys, their romantic feelings for and attention to boys, as well as the attention they receive from boys. I interpret that within a narrow range girls participate in romantic practice and produce a romantic culture in a kindergarten classroom.

In analyzing the girls' claiming of the subject position of a girlfriend, I think that heteronormativity goes a long way in explaining why the girls' invested themselves in being girlfriends. According to Robbins and Diaz (2006), under the heteronormative framework, femininity outside of heterosexuality is not considered legitimate. It is even

marginalized and punished. Therefore, being a girlfriend should be interpreted as the girls' vigorous and careful construction of gender in heteronormativity by taking "the most prestigious legitimators of femininity" (Renold, 2006, p. 314). In light of such an observation, I can argue that the 5- and 6-year-old girls who asserted a subject position of girlfriend were constructed by and constructed girlhoods "legitimately." Although they were barely allowed to do anything more than make claims of their girlfriend subject position, most girls seemed to locally establish heteronormativity in the kindergarten classroom.

"I like him when he is not naughty.": Being an assertive girlfriend.

> He is a little bit naughty, though. I like him because he is handsome. When he does do something naughty, I do not like him. I like him when he is not naughty.
> (FN1107200520).

Like many girls, when Soo-jin expressed her romantic feelings for a boy, she drew attention to her disapproval of his naughty side. Even as she constructed her girlhood through taking the subject position as a girlfriend, she asserted her distance from his naughtiness. I often heard girls' critiques about boys' naughty or aggressive behaviors like Soo-jin. Although being a girlfriend is a desirable subject position for girls, as Soo-jin shows, the girls did not perform their gender as girlfriends in the stereotypical way. A girl clarified her negative stance to a boy's naughtiness even if he was desirable to them.

The girls' construction of an assertive girlfriend in a heterosexual relationship is also seen in Sei-young. In the previous vignette, Sei-young sought to validate her appearance by asking, "Do you think it is pretty?" (FN0913200520) This would suggest

Sei-young's internalization of the male gaze and reveal Sei-young's "normative heterosexual standard of desirability" (Renold, 2000, p. 312). The following vignette shows Sei-young's construction of gender as an assertive girlfriend.

> At a play dough table, Sei-young is making noodles with a garlic press. Young-jun (boy), Jae-youn, Ji-ho (boy), and Ji-hoon (boy) are sitting together. All the boys are holding garlic presses except for Young-jun. After Sei-young puts down her press, Young-jun grasps it.
>
> 1. Sei-young: Hey (*grabbing back her garlic press from Young-jun's hand*) It's mine.
> 2. Ji-hwan: (*putting clay into his garlic press*) Hey, Sei-young Park, is Young Jun Lee still your dad?
> 3. Sei-young: (*opening the press*) Yeah (*placing the press down on the desk again and stacking noodle-like clay to the side*) Young-Jun Lee is still my dad.
> 4. Young-jun: (*trying to take Sei-young's garlic press on the desk*)
> 5. Sei-young: (*grabbing her press*) I'm going to tell the teacher.
> 6. Ji-hwan: Hey, use it one more time and then let Young-jun have it
> 7. Jun-ho: (*throwing a piece of square shaped clay on the desk*) Hey, why are you acting like that towards your dad?
> 8. Sei-young: (*pressing the kitchen tool to make her noodles even longer*) Why would a dad steal my things?
> (FN 0901200516)

Sei-young asserted herself here and at seeing such assertiveness, Ji-ho (boy) asked about the status of her romantic relation with Young-jun. He also insinuated his critique of her not sharing the press with her boyfriend. Furthermore, this exchange gets at the question of why she doesn't want to share a garlic press with her boyfriend even though he wants it. Sei-young was unabashed about her romantic relationship with Young-jun. Sei-young casually affirmed it. I could see that she didn't hesitate or feel awkward about it. Although Sei-young maintained her romantic feelings, she did not relinquish the garlic press. When Young-jun again tried to take it from her, Sei-young threatened to report his behavior to Ms. Jung.

Watching Sei-young refuse to give up the garlic press to Jung-sung again, Ji-ho raised his voice, saying, “Give it to Young-jun after you finish one more time.” In terms of sharing or turn-taking, Sei-young controlled the garlic press even when she put it down. Jae-youn (boy) also criticized Sei-young’s deviant behaviors as a girlfriend: by not sharing with her boyfriend and adopting an aggressive attitude. Instead of reserving her desire to have fun and complete her work, Sei-young defended herself by pointing out Young-jun’s silent commandeering of the garlic press: rather than keeping quiet, Sei-young objected and pointed out Young-jun’s selfish and rude behavior.

In the above vignette, Sei-young constructed her heteronormative girlhood through acknowledging, in front of her classmates, her position as Young-jun’s girlfriend. Although she positioned herself within heteronormativity, she did not follow the stereotypical constructions as a girlfriend. She neither put up with her boyfriend's violent behavior, nor relinquished her desire for him. Unperturbed by the other boy’s critiques, she simply determined to finish her work. Even critiques from the other boys did not sway her. Resisting the stereotypical subordinate female position, Sei-young performed her gender as a heteronormative, but also as an assertive and determined being. That is, she did not give up her romantic desire and neither did she adopt a passive attitude.

For the girls of Ms. Jung’s class, being a girlfriend, or more specifically positioning oneself within heteronormativity, was the desirable and valuable way of being a girl. Therefore, even in a context in which they were relatively limited to performing gender as heteronormative beings, the girls constructed girlhoods which were full of romance, boyfriends, love, and marriage. However, the girls’ constructions of

themselves as girlfriends in a romantic relationship does not necessarily mean that their reproductions of stereotypical femininity. In fact, their constructions were characterized as being independent, determined, and assertive girlfriends. I believe that although the girls construct and were constructed by heteronormative girlhoods, they complicated the ways of being a girl by taking positions as girlfriends from a broad range of possibilities, much like the Australian girls of Jones (1996).

They Like Each Other, Don't' They?: Girls' Romanticization of Girl-Boy Relations

Positioning themselves as girlfriends, some girls in the research setting publicized their boyfriends, or their romantic feelings toward or interests in boys in front of others. They also tended to romanticize other girls' relations with boys. The vignette below is a conversation between two girls and me, about a steady and stable mixed-gender relationship. The two girls believed that these two children were a couple:

1. Jaeh-hui: Then is there a couple in Ms. Jung's class?
2. Ju-min: Yes, there is.
3. So-jung: Yes. I know them.
4. Jae-hui: Could you tell me who is a couple?
5. Ju-min: Jun. . .
6. So-jung: (*interrupting Ju-min's answer*) That is a secret. (*looking at Jae-hui*) They asked me not to tell anybody that they love each other. If I tell you, I will be in trouble.
7. Jae-hui: Why did they ask you to keep the secret about their being a couple?
8. Ju-min: Because they like each. . .
9. Hei-yong: Because they are embarrassed. Other kids make fun of them.
10. Jae-hui: Do you have anyone you want to be a couple with?
11. So-jung: I do.
12. So-jung: Well, I do and I don't. One boy likes me, but I don't like him. I like another boy, but he likes another girl

> The interview continued with a discussion of the reason why they like a particular boy (IT11142005).

While Ju-min and So-jung participated in an interview regarding a couple, Ju-min nearly divulged a name of a couple in line 5. Interrupting, So-jung refused to give their names because "it is a secret." Then, So-jung said to me that she promised to keep silent about their romantic relationship: in terms of So-jung's description, being in love with each other. To my question about why they wanted to keep their relation secret to others, So-jung pointed out the potential for humiliation from other students if their romantic feelings or status as a couple were made known to others: "Because they would be embarrassed. Other kids would make fun of them." This particular interview led me to notice the tendency of the girls to perceive mixed-gender dyads as not just cross-gender friendships. So-jung characterized this girl's relationship with this boy as "being in love."

Interestingly enough for me, the girls in the research setting tended to assume romantic feelings or interests between a girl and a boy in a relationship. Min-ju speculated about Tae-yun and Dong-min (boy) (FN 1013200528).

> I saw her playing with him a lot and also they are close together. And…she…she treats Dong-min like a servant and he listens to her. So, [I think that] they like each other, don't they?

For Min-ju, Tae-yun's dominant position over Dong-min and Dong-min's soft and gentle attitude to Tae-yun betrayed a romantic connection between them. Other mixed-gender dyads (Jun-hee and Hyun-sung, and Mi-ra and In-woo) in the research setting were the subject of similar speculations (FN 1006200541, FN 1114200523).

According to the literature (Davies, 2003; Renold, 2006; Thorne, 1993), mixed-gender relationships are risky endeavors for young children because they can become a target of teasing. This point came up in an informal interview with Ms. Jung (RJ09262005). When Ms. Jung and I discussed certain girls' steady and stable relationships with boys, she attributed the decrease of mixed-gender relationships in 5-year-olds to external pressures from peers, "teasing." The field notes from participant observation include a couple of incidents where girls make comments about another girl playing with a boy and presume a romance between them: "Are you too close to each other?" (FN 0909200504), "Do you love each other?" (FN 0913200516), and "Are you going to give it [an origami] to someone? Ah! In-woo [boy]" (FN 1006200541). Though short questions, they can breakup ongoing play between a girl and a boy. The girls' efforts to romanticize a girl-boy relationship limited other girls' lived practices in selecting play partners from both sides of the gender binary. The following vignette shows how a girl is questioned because of her practices with boys.

> At a snack table, Yu-na talks to In-woo. Both of them played at block center, pretending to transfer the eggs of dinosaurs to protect them.
>
> 1. Yu-na: Let's do that everyday.
> 2. In-woo: (*nodding his head in agreement*)
> 3. You-jin: (*to other students at snack table*) They may like each other. I mean Yu-na and In-woo. They play together everyday because they like each other
> 4. Yu-na: (*shaking her head no*)
> (FN 0920200512).

According to Yu-na later, they pretended to protect the eggs of dinosaurs from a pelican. Though Yu-na's suggestion to In-woo did not seem romantic, You-jin speculated that they were romantically close. You-jin's assumption prompted Yu-na's denial and the

silence that followed. In romanticizing Yu-na's practice, You-jin found herself in a dominant position. Yu-na passively denied her romance with In-woo and stayed silent.

The following vignette also displays a girl' romanticization and problematization of another girl's interaction with a boy. Yoon-su confronts the steady and stable mixed gender dyad of Jun-hee and Hyun-sung and problemetizes their closeness.

> Jun-hee and Hyun-sung are making a snow family with clay at the art table. Yoon-su comes and leans on the table and watches them make the snow people. Yoon-su reaches out and touches the complete figures.
>
> 1. Jun-hee: (*sharply*) Hey, don't touch them.
> 3. Yoon-su: Okay, okay (*still touching them*).
> 3. Hyun-sung: Hey Yoon-su Kim. Stop touching them.
> 4. Yoon-su: (*looking at Jun-hee*) Are you and Hyun-sung friends?
> 5. Jun-hui: Why, can't we?
> 6. Yoon-su: No, you can't.
> 7. Hyun-sung: What? Why not? Who says so?
> 8. Jun-hui: Girls and boys can't be friends or something?
> 9. Yoon-su: (*appearing sullen and then hears children at the classroom door*) They're coming.
> (FN1025200544)

Forbidden to touch snowpersons made by Jun-hee and Hyun-sung, Yoon-su raised an issue about the closeness of Jun-hee and Hyun-sung, which had been easy to see in Ms. Jung's class. With a tone insinuating some sort of romance between them, Yoon-su seemed to disapprove of Jun-hee's closeness to Hyun-sung. Yoon-su's intention seemed to attempt to undermine Jun-hee's dominance resulting from her ownership of snowpersons by romanticizing Ju-hee's practices of playing with a boy. Without hesitation or awkwardness, Jun-hee acknowledged her closeness to Hyun-sung. Jun-hee's defiance was quite distinct from most other girls who recoiled from such comments. Both students resisted Yoon-su's problematization of their practice of playing together.

Depending on the individuals' right to choose a play partner, from my perspective, Jun-hee interfered with the normalized way of being a girl within compulsory heterosexuality.

Interestingly enough, the girls of Ms. Jung's class who claimed the girlfriend subject position were not the target of speculation or comment from other girls. This seeming inconsistency may be explained by considering the role of the girls' comments in making their surrounding social world heteronormative. Openly established in heteronormativity, the girlfriend subject position was unassailable.

To sum up, I have scrutinized girls' romanticization of girl-boy relationships occurring in the research setting. The data point out that the girls appreciated a girl-boy relationship based on heteronormativity. Girls applied the fundamental heteronormative principle to other girls' practices, which is in the line with the findings of Renold's (2006) study. The girls' romanticization was the embodiment of their heteronormative girlhood construction. Moreover, their romanticization of girl-boy relations might have been their act to normalize a local setting in which they were situated. That is, through defining girl-boy relations as heteronormative practices, the girls in the research setting attempted to establish local heteronormativity in order to make their lives consistent in and outside kindergarten.

"He Might Like You.": Girls' Romanticization of Male Violence

The girls' constructions of heteronormative girlhood interfered with their resistance toward oppressive practices imposed upon them. Because the girls in the research setting prioritized constructing girlhoods within heteronormativity, they were

likely to be unable to take a critical perspective on a male character's meanness to a female character in a storybook. In a very similar way, girls in the research setting tended to tolerate boys' violent behavior. Moreover, some girls romanticized boys' violence and appreciated them as an expression of romantic feelings or interests in girls.

The girls of Ms. Jung's class were tolerant toward a male character's mean attitude in the *Paper Bag Princess*. Taking a position as a heteronormative girl, the girls subverted the feminist storyline in the book, *Paper Bag Princess* (Munsch, 1992). *Paper Bag Princess* tells the story of Princess Elizabeth who saves the kidnapped Prince Ronald from a dragon. However, instead of showing gratitude to Elizabeth, Ronald criticizes her for being filthy when she arrives to save him. Elizabeth confronts him, brakes off her engagement, and then leaves.

After hearing the story, the students of Ms. Jung's class shared their reading of a text as a group or in smaller, more private conversations with me. Generally, the girls wanted to modify the ending to make it more romantic–Princess Elizabeth submits to Prince Ronald's demand to dress up like a princess and, finally, to marry him. That is, the girls in the research setting seemed to resist a feminist storyline in which a female character exists outside heteronormative practices; they chose instead to rewrite the story. The majority gave modified "happy-ever-after" endings: "I think, she will ask him to buy a new dress and then get married to him" (IT11072005). Only the how of Elizabeth's getting a "fantastic," "new," and "pretty" dress differentiated the girls' modified endings. Shopping was the most frequent solution; one girl brought Elizabeth's father back to life from the dragon's stomach as a patron for shopping. In the girls' ending, a dragon

suddenly vomits up a castle. Seeing that her castle has burned, Jun-hee created an ending in which Elizabeth resolves her problem: "She makes her clothes from a paper bag. And then she makes a pattern like this. And...attaches arms like these and she wears a bracelet like this. And then, she looks at herself in a mirror".

In reading and modifying *Paper Bag Princess,* the girls apparently resisted the way of being outside heteronormative romance. While the girls, unlike the boys, held no hateful feelings toward Princess Elizabeth's power to overcome the dragon, they did reject the princess's choice of being outside heteronormative romance. Most girls in the research setting seemed to embrace Elizabeth's autonomous and brave deed to save Prince Ronald,[45] but rejected her choice to leave Ronald. Soo-jin even suggested a moral failing on her part, saying "she is not right because she broke her promise [of engagement]" (IT 11072005). Under the predominance of heteronormativity, I think, the girls could not countenance Elizabeth's being anything other than a wife. So when they had a chance to modify the original ending to something more desirable, the girls generated endings that faithfully followed the romantic stereotypes. I argue that such modifications reflect what the girls of the research setting desire and value.

This finding is inconsistent with Korean studies informed by the socialization perspective claiming that the effects of gender-equitable storybooks serve to curb students' gender stereotypical beliefs or perceptions (Won, S. H., 2002). Inconsistencies in my data compared to previous Korean early childhood literature will be detailed in the

[45] Compared to the girls, boys in the research setting were furious about the victimization of Ronald and his being saved by a girl. One boy even complained: He [Ronald] SAID when she would change her dirty dress, he would marry her. Then, why [are you] bothered?

following chapter with respect to research methodology for studies on young children. My data aligns rather with Davies (2003) and Davies and Kasama (2004).

The girls of Ms. Jung's class were also tolerant of boys' aggressive behaviors against them. In response to the boys' aggressive behaviors, some girls took actions in the research setting. The girls positioned themselves as oppositional beings displaying solidarity in their search for revenge, teaming up, complaining to adults, and even confrontation (Francis, 1999; Thorne, 1993). However, some girls did not partake in teaming up and keep themselves away from boys. Taking a passive position, the girls seemed to naturalize the boys' violent behavior (i.e., running around, kicking, and wrestling in a classroom), ". . . Are they the five musketeers? They like to play like fighting" (FN1112200540).

Another way girls dealt with boys' violence was by romanticizing it. Some girls interpreted violent behaviors as their way of expressing romantic feelings (FN0908200509/ FN1010200529). Among them, Hae-in displayed a very generous attitude toward boys' violent behavior on the playground: "Well, I think that they like Yu-na. . . .So, they keep chasing her to get her attention" (FN1013200528). When Yu-na got hit by one of the major chasers, the news spread rapidly among students of Ms. Jung's class. Every student paid attention to what happened next. Some girls didn't hide the fact that they were upset. When the girls and I talked about chasing, Hae-in revealed her romanticized perception of boys' repeated chasing and invasion of Yu-na's space. Interestingly, the way Hae-in explained boys' chasing was very similar to romantic clichés of a male pursuer and a female pursued. With exclusive consideration of the

chaser's point of view, the cliché makes chasing the chaser's courtship ritual regardless of the chaser's lived experience. Sticking to the romantic cliché, Hae-in accounted for what happened to Yu-na from the chaser's perspective. What Hae-in said, from my perspective, obviously demonstrated her perpetuation of the romanticizing attitude toward any types of girl-boy relations. The obvious physical, emotional, and psychological agony and struggle of Yu-na and the shared sympathy among girls seemed to be invisible to Hae-in.

A similar practice was also found with Min-ju who romanticized even her experience of being hit by a boy. While she rode a swing, she romanticized a boy's hitting her stomach.

> Ji-hoon (boy) was there, too. And he told me he liked me (to Na-young next to her on the swing) . . . but do you think he really does? I think. . . he does, you know why? You know why? Because Ji-hoon is too embarrassed to tell girls he likes them. He's shy, so he's trying to get attention by bothering me. So, he does. He does like me. (FN1010200509).

Like a monologue, Min-ju depicted what happened to her at another boys' birthday party. Min-ju mentioned him often as her romantic partner throughout the data collection. Accounting for Ji-hon's violence, Min-ju reasoned that his violent behavior was the result of his embarrassment. From Min-ju's viewpoint, Ji-hoon was embarrassed because he could not speak of his feelings for a girl he liked. Instead of telling, according to Min-ju, he bothered her to get her attention. According to Min-ju, his sort of behavior is not exclusive to himself. In fact, many boys at the birthday party behaved similarly. In terms of girls' ways of expressing feelings, Min-ju notes that girls were able to verbalize their feelings regardless of the embarrassment that came with it.

This vignette illustrates Min-ju's romanticization of boys' behaviors as an act to express his favorable feelings and to get attention from a girl. Using this sort of romanticization, Min-ju developed her argument based on certain male-female binary concepts: verbal vs. non-verbal and emotional vs. indifferent. Participating in reproduction of certain types of ways of being a girl and a boy, Min-ju justified Young-jin's violent behavior toward her. More seriously, from my perspective, Min-ju loses her critical point of view and adopted a romanticized one of boys' picking on girls or their physical invasion of girls' space. Based on what she said above, this violence was an expression of boys' favorable feelings for girls. In her eyes, the boys' violent behavior need not be taken seriously or criticized by girls as it springs from the boys' inability to express their emotions.

Renold (2000) refers to similar incidents of primary school girls who are romantically involved with verbally abusive boys. According to her, girls are limited in challenging boys' abusive practices because of "the pressure to perform as heterosexually desirable and to access the position of girlfriend" (p. 315). In spite of contextual discrepancies between girls' practices, I believe, her point offers a direction for interpreting and analyzing the girls' romanticization of the boys' violent behaviors. In a context in which heteronormativity was overwhelming and fundamental in performing proper gender for girls, resistance to boys' violence, regarded in association with their romantic interest, seemed to be unavailable to girls. That is, confronting boys' improper expression of their romantic feelings or interests cast a girl outside the heterosexual matrix in which the girl could perform proper femininity. Therefore, I can argue that the

girls' romanticization of the boys' violence gave rise to the dominant practice of heteronormativity.

What I explored above is how romantic relationships dominated and controlled the girls to accept the oppressive practice of male violence. While the girls were constructed by and constructed heteronormative girlhoods, being a girlfriend or receiving romantic attention from boys was a more desirable, valuable, and even normal practice for girls. Consequently, even though they recognized the unfairness of male violence, they regarded it as difficult to confront. Confronting one's boyfriend would result in exclusion from romantic relations. Subsequently, it would jeopardize her construction of girlhood.

Despite the theorization of girls' romanticization based on heteronormativity, I strongly feel the need to mention that the girls' practices tended to be promoted by adults. Thus, Yu-na explained that her mom offered an explanation of boys' violence. When I was a kindergarten teacher, I actually responded to girls who complained of boys' chasing or picking on them by saying, "he might like you." As a researcher, I heard similar cajoling words from other school authorities. There could be a couple of accounts of this repeated romanticization by adults. First, the prevalent heteronormativity in society forces adults to apply a romantic lens to what happens between a girl and a boy. Second, it is the result of trivializing students' practices, which is defined as sexist discrimination by Francis (reference). Unlike in secondary school, the dominant image of children in kindergarten as innocent beings seems to make adults overlook the seriousness of what really happens to girls.

Summary

I have examined girls' constructions of heteronormative girlhood that have been regarded as nonexistent in early childhood by the mainstream ECE field. Moving beyond the narrow conceptualization of heterosexuality predominantly associated with sexual acts or behaviors, I applied Rich's conceptualization of heterosexuality to girls' lived practices. The findings of this section highlight the various ways in which the girls attempted to correctly position themselves within and maintain heteronormativity in the research setting. Despite the prevalence of heteronormativity in the research setting, the girls' practices as heteronormative girls were very limited. In general, it occurred in acts such as reading cultural texts, taking about marriage, and claiming a boyfriend.

First, the girls voluntarily circulated many cultural texts that included heterosexual romantic elements. These texts from adult's and/or children's pop culture served to perpetuate heteronormativity in a kindergarten class. Second, among the girls, marriage between a man and a woman was considered the norm for being a female. The girls did not perceive the possibility of being a female outside marriage and they problematized the single life. Next, some girls in the research setting publicized their taking of the subject position of girlfriend. Being subject to heteronormative desire, many girls of Ms. Jung's class did not hide their romantic attention to boys. Nonetheless, the girls barely displayed any type of participation in flirting or courtship. In addition, taking a position within heteronormativity, the girls projected heteronormativity onto others. That is, the girls tended to perceive mixed-gender dyads as romantic.

The girls' constructions of heteronormative girlhood suggest that the girls' collectively cross-over the binary of child/adult. As noted in the dominant image of children in the ECE as innocent and immature, the dominant society does not regard young children as eligible participants in heteronormative practice. But data gathered in the research setting clearly illustrate a conflict between the girls' practices and the social expectation. For instance, the girls talked about their romantic interests in good looking boys. In spite of the limited extent to which they participated in heteronormative practice, the findings indicate that the girls work hard to jointly position themselves in heteronormativity. Their firm position as heteronormative girls, however, throws water on their critical attitude of boys' aggressive behavior. In the research setting, the girls even resisted a feminist storyline in which a female character makes a deviant decision outside heteronormativity.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Implication of the Study

In this final chapter I briefly revisit this study and discuss the findings of the locally constructed girlhoods in one Korean kindergarten classroom. Then, I present several implications for future exploration in this area. In doing this, I first summarize the particular the need for this study, the theoretical perspective, the research questions, and the research design. The three constructed girlhoods—girlish girlhood, oppositional girlhood, and heteronormative girlhood—from girls' everyday talk and behaviors are reviewed with consideration of the research questions. At the same time, I discuss the meanings from the findings of the study in relation to the multiple broader contexts I mentioned in Chapter One. What follows are possible future directions for Korean early childhood practices, dominant early childhood practices, and future research. In suggesting implications, I have no intention of extrapolating what I learned from the locally constructed girlhoods to other local settings.

Revisiting the Study

This dissertation is a report of a case study done on Korean girls' constructions of girlhood in a kindergarten class. The decision to take gender as an avenue to appreciate young children was influenced by four factors: 1) a critical perception of my own previous teaching being partially gender-blind and even complicit in reinforcing the Korean patriarchal social system, 2) an increasing interest in gender equality in Korean

society and the Korean ECE field, 3) the apparent lack of studies in the dominant ECE field that explore and describe how gender "profoundly shapes/mediates" (Lather, 1991) young children's lives, and, finally, 4) the little attention paid to girls and Korean young children in the dominant ECE field. The research questions guiding this study are: 1) What are the constructions of girlhood that emerge in a Korean kindergarten class? and 2) How do the girls in the class negotiate the constructions of girlhood?

The foundation for my thinking while pursuing this study was laid by a wide range of feminist scholars. Those feminist scholars, all deeply influenced by post-structuralism in or outside the ECE field (Blaise, 2005; Davies, 2003; MacNaughton, 2000; Thorne, 1993; Walkerdine, 1990; Yelland, 1998), helped me see gender as a social construction in which a child interacts with her/his social world. Conceptualizing gender this way, they moved me beyond the perspectives that now dominate the ECE field; that is, the biological, socialization, and cognitive development perspectives on gender. From the social constructionist perspective, a child constructs and is constructed by gender within a context of interacting with numerous competing and contradicting ideas of being a girl or boy. Therefore, gender is not unitary, static, and consistent; rather, it is multiple, shifting, and contradictory depending on the context. This conceptualization led me to look for specificities, particularities, and localities of what I observed in Ms. Jung's classroom.

Despite their claims of considering a context in gender construction, these feminist scholars do not reduce young girls' gender to merely a context. By emphasizing a child's agency, they distinguish themselves from the socialization perspective.

Rejecting the model of a child being depicted as "an uncritical and unselective sponge" (MacNaughton, 2000, p. 21) that passively absorbs external stimuli, these feminist scholars acknowledge a child as an active player in her/his everyday gender constructions. A girl reads, evaluates, and negotiates many different ways of being a girl and takes a certain subject position. As a result of this process, only certain ways of being a girl are regarded as desirable, valuable, and right in a local setting. In other words, a certain way of being a girl becomes normal. The normalized girlhood makes other possibilities of being a girl or a boy invisible, unheard, and marginalized through the exercise of regulatory power. However, the norm has been reconstructed through girls' consistent reading, evaluation, and negotiation of new ideas of being a girl. This point, with respect to power relations among various gender performances, provides a significant framework to make a researcher move beyond the dominant tendency of gender studies in the ECE field: focusing on individual children. Compared to the current studies mainly perceiving gendered practices of young children as the consequences of their stereotypical choices or interests, the social constructionist perspective recognizes power structures operating in children's choices or interests.

Data for this study were collected from August to December of 2005 in one class of 5- and 6-year-olds at H Kindergarten in Seoul, Korea. The data sources were field notes from participant observation, audiotapes of children talking with others, interviews with both students and the teacher, and, finally, a research journal. I visited the classroom four times a week, usually for four hours at a stretch. And to help provide a deeper understanding of girlhood constructions, interviews (informal and sometimes semi-

formal) were also conducted with students and the teachers. Meanwhile, in the research journal I kept my observations and reflected on the process of data analysis.

Analysis, done in two phases, was carried out in and out of the research setting. Although it always began with daily organization and management of data, full attention was given to the data only after leaving the research setting. The data was coded and organized according to the principles of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After much comparing of codes and categories, I came to identify three constructions of girlhoods: appearance-based girlish girlhood, oppositional girlhood, and heterosexual girlhood.

Contrary to the previous chapter in which I answered both research questions without clearly distinguishing between them, I specifically focus on each research question here in reviewing the emergent constructions of girlhood in daily talk and behaviors of Korean young girls.

What are the Constructions of Girlhood that Emerge in a Kindergarten Classroom?

By observing girls' talk and behaviors through a social constructionist perspective, I have uncovered three constructions of girlhood in one Korean kindergarten. They are appearance-based girlish girlhood, oppositional girlhood, and heteronormative girlhood. The emerging girlhoods in the research setting were discursively constructed in relation to the three imperative ideas about being a girl that pervaded the girls' everyday classroom experience. Although the three constructions are relevant to different aspects of life for a young Korean girl, they are not mutually exclusive or competitive. First,

appearance-based girlish girlhood is constituted by and constitutes girls' bodies and bodily practices by correctly signifying their gender. Oppositional girlhood manifests itself in girls' everyday endeavors to maintain the legitimacy of the gender binary. Finally, heteronormative girlhood is a reflection of the pervasiveness of heteronormativity in Korean society at large.

The girls individually and collectively (re)constructed the girlhoods by producing and participating in peer-culture (Corsaro, 1985). The pedagogical foundations of the local institution—child-centeredness and free-play—allowed the girls to frequently organize into girls-only or girls-dominant groups with little adult intervention. With their peers, the girls explored and negotiated a wide range of possibilities for being a girl outside the curriculum. Thus the girls enthusiastically brought in ideas from pop culture, the market, close adult females, etc. By interacting with these ideas, the girls occasionally crossed the child/adult binary in girl-led groups. Their conversations about romantic rituals as appear on page 278, for example break the mold of innocent girls that the Korean ECE field has pigeonholed them into.

Appearance-based girlish girlhood: By wearing commercialized materials and performing certain behaviors, girls in the research setting performed perfectly as girlish girls (Butler, 1999). Through careful and repeated performative actions that are socially and culturally linked to girls, the bodies of 5- and 6-year-olds girls became feminized. Three subtypes of girlishness can be distinguished from the girls' feminized bodies: a pretty appearance, a well-groomed appearance, and a properly-covered appearance. Girls in the research setting demonstrated careful management in order to make their bodies

and bodily practices suitable to the three appearances. As appearance is deeply intertwined with one's way of being (Davies, 2003), I believe that each of the three appearances is not separable from a girl's positioning in a certain subject position.

The girls' constructions of girlish girlhood were explicitly mediated by the local kindergarten contrary to the other two girlhoods. Situated in an institutional context in which her status as a genderless student may be more emphasized, a girl was required to modify and adjust her practices as a girlish girl. Two institutional guidelines—"comfortable clothing" and "no personal belongings"—interfered with girls' wearing skirts and accessories. For girls who regularly had a half hour of playground time, wearing skirts was not always a desirable practice. Thus, skirts restricted the girls from performing properly as students who were required to be full participants in physical activities. The girls of Ms. Jung's class partially resolved the tension between being pretty girls and being kindergartners by wearing a bottom-covering garment. Contrary to adolescent girls' practices (Kim, K. A. (2002), a bottom-covering garment empowers young girls insofar as it liberates them.

The girls in the research setting negotiate appropriate appearances considering whether or not a certain practice is allowed them. Based on the binary of child/adult, they did not accept a certain practice as a desirable, valuable, or appropriate way of adorning themselves. When So-jung said to Yoon-su, "Kids are not pretty with pierced ears," she was embracing the adult/child binary to discuss appropriate appearances. Also, some girls of Ms. Jung's class negotiated appropriate appearance in relation to social and cultural expectations. This was observed when some girls' distanced themselves from the

excessiveness and pretentiousness of pretty girls, princess syndrome. For the same reason, I believe that the girls marginalized a girl who failed to keep a slim body—the dominant image of Korean females. There were some who, seeing it violating individual rights, collectively resisted the oppression of this dominant body image.

Being the desired, valued, and right ways of showing one's girlhood, these constructions deeply pervaded the classroom lives of 5- and 6-year-old girls. An individual girl carefully and skillfully managed herself in order to fit into the three constructions of girlhood. However, as the social constructionist perspective states, what is desirable, valuable and appropriate for girls is ever shifting, diverse, and contradictory. Because the three girlhoods are also a social construction, they are always subject to girls' negotiation. As a result, the girls consistently constructed, negotiated, and reconstructed local girlhoods.

Oppositional girlhood: Girls in the research setting constructed themselves as oppositional beings against boys by correctly positioning themselves within the gender binary. They also strived to maintain an unambiguous gender boundary. These efforts are part of what is called category maintenance work (Davies, 2003). Compared to the other two constructions of girlhood talked about here, oppositional girlhood is closely connected to girls' institutional experiences. Using a social constructionist perspective, I shed new light on these familiar practices of girls' for many ECE educators and scholars. Giving critical attention to the current gender binary system underneath observable differences between girls and boys, this perspective conceptualizes girls' gendered practices as social constructions.

Under the gender binary, being *not a boy* is central to *being a girl*. Girls in the research setting showed themselves to be girls, not boys, by making the so-called gender appropriate decision regarding the centers the girls tended to go to, games they frequently played, toys they owned, and even the ways they behaved. Moreover, the girls attempted to remove vague positions between the two polarities in order to make the gender binary legitimate and effective. Incorrect or vague ways of being between the two polarities were disregarded, marginalized, and even removed by the girls, who attempted to maintain the gender binary. It is for this reason that firefighter play was collectively snubbed by the girls.

Borderwork (Thorne, 1993) is a practice through which girls interact with boys along clearly marked gender boundaries with a sense of difference. In the local setting, I found three types of borderwork: contest, chasing, and girls' team—referred to as "troupe" by Thorne. In organizing and participating in various types of borderwork, the girls positioned themselves according to the valorized gender category. As the girls organized a more tight and solidified group in borderwork, the emotional and psychological tensions also grew in the local setting. In fact, the girls' antagonistic outbursts toward certain hegemonic masculine boys were much more pronounced in borderwork. Even though I apply Thorne's findings in order to understand the choreography girls' of togetherness and separation, I am cautious about contextual differences between her study and this research project.

The institution encourages and discourages the girls' constructions of oppositional girlhood. Whenever an incident related to gender occurred, Ms. Jung got involved. By

doing so, she opened up the possibility to be in-between and, moreover, to multiply and complicate the locally established girlhoods. However, the prevalence of child-centeredness in the Korean ECE field seemed to sometimes sideline Ms. Jung, especially during indoor free-choice activity. Furthermore, the developmental lens of young children obscured her understanding of how gender permeates indoor free-choice activity and classroom discussion. As a result, she had limited pedagogical power over the girls' self-separation from the boys.

Despite the predominance of oppositional girlhoods in the research setting, the girls often questioned and resisted the gender binary by taking in-between positions. Whenever an ambiguous position interrupted the gender binary, the category maintenance work was set in motion. Nonetheless, many girls of Ms. Jung's class demonstrated tolerance toward other girls' participation in warrior narratives as viewers, consumers, and players. Mainly, this was because female characters appear in those warrior narratives. In other words, the female characters in *Power Force* or Mir-gaon seemed to legitimize girls' in-between practices. Some girls, playing the roles of female characters who appeared in warrior narratives, experienced—beyond the narrow range of their usual possibilities (Marsh, 2000)—different ways of being a girl.

Heteronormative girlhood: Heteronormativity is pervasive in the local constructions of girlhood. Heterosexuality is spoken of as natural and normal (Robinson & Díaz, 2006) in their daily conversations and behaviors in the local context. Inhabiting a heteronormative society, the girls in the research setting were not innocent bystanders. As peripheral participants (Paechter, 2006), they took part in a variety of heterosexual

practices: (re)reading cultural texts that include heterosexual romance, normalizing marriage as a way of life, claiming the subject position of a girlfriend, and making their surrounding world heteronormative.

One path by which the girls participated in heteronormative practices was in the reading of (heterosexual) romantic cultural texts. While the girls (re)read cultural texts, they did not just encode words or sentences. As interpreters, they examined, evaluated, and recreated what was promoted by cultural texts as being desirable, valuable, and appropriate. Marriage frequently came up in day to day conversations. Though diverse ways of being a female outside heterosexual romantic relationships became visible in the broader Korean culture, the girls ignored, problematized, and disregarded those alternative way of being.

Having a boyfriend or claiming the subject position of a girlfriend was central to girls' constructions of heteronormative girlhood in the local classroom. Many girls publicly announced their positions within the heterosexual matrix by claiming to be someone's girlfriend. They presented themselves as the subject of heterosexual desires, not merely as objects of boys' desires. Such bold claims were not, however, followed up with any action. In other words, the girls made their daily practices heteronormative by claiming their positions within heterosexual romantic relationships, but they did not participate in heterosexual practices. This is a product of the child/adult binary, another underlying social structure that dominates young girls' lives. Even though young children live in a society that subtly promotes heterosexuality as the norm, they are not regarded as full-participants in heterosexual practices (Paechter, 2006; Thorne, 1993).

Although young girls' heteronormative practices are noticeable in an early childhood setting, they are often regarded as irrelevant to or even nonexistent in children's lives. The dominant image of children as "innocent and asexual Other[s]" (Robinson & Díaz, 2006, p. 153), upheld by the Korean ECE field, conceals a vibrant heteronormativity. Paradoxically, the Korean national curriculum and educational materials promote heteronormativity by endorsing heteronormative families. The girls' heteronormative performance and the Korean national curriculum transformed an early childhood classroom into a heteronormative institution in which heterosexuality was exclusively sanctioned.

The findings of this study show that Korean girls' constructions of girlhood include two threads for discussion that intersect the local girlhoods: the complexities of girlhood and commercialism. The girls' gendered practices in the research setting were more complicated than as described in mainstream ECE literature. As a result, the findings of this study suggest communal practices between the girls and older females in Korea. Here, I am not implying that young girls' practices directly reflected Korean adult female culture. I am saying that their lives were not immune from the social, cultural, political, and economic contexts surrounding them. For instance, contrary to the Korean national curriculum's discussion of boys from the perspective of development, the girls were aware of the social and cultural connotations of a certain body shape. Some girls even dieted to keep their weight down.

The second area, commercialism, was deeply entrenched in Korean girls' constructions of girlhood in the local setting. The girls' bodies were gendered by a variety

of trendy feminizing materials. Commercialized cultural texts were also circulated in the local setting and were performed by young girls. Especially, the local girlish girlhood is evidence of the prevalence of consumerism in girlhood in Korean culture. Returning from browsing retail shops, the girls of Ms. Jung's class brought to class an item or at least a story of what they saw there. Lamb and Brown assert (2006) that the market propagates certain ways of being a girl through its merchandise. Thus the girls' conversations about what's new in retail shops can be said to be their collective reading and interpretation of a newly promoted way of being a girl by the market.

In similar ways, commercialized cultural texts also propose certain types of subject positions for girls. But they give paradoxical messages to girls. The majority of cultural texts including educational materials contribute to normalizing heterosexuality and to reproducing the heteronormative ways of being a girl. Nonetheless, some texts broaden the range of possibilities. Thus, by accepting the role of a female character, girls in the research setting took distinctive subject positions that were less likely possible for girls in their realities (March, 2000). As another social force in local girls' construction of girlhood, Korean commercialism puts forth the possibilities and/or limitations of girls' practices.

The three constructions are seen as the more desirable, valuable, and right way of being. An individual girl carefully and skillfully manages herself in order to fit into the three constructions of girlhood. Dominant girlhood, however, is ever shifting, diverse, and contradictory. Because the three constructed girlhoods are also a social construction,

they are always subject to girls' negotiation. The following section responds to the second research question of how girls negotiate girlhoods.

How Do the Girls in the Classroom Negotiate the Constructions of Girlhood?

Since the girls' constructions of girlhood were bound to a specific context, the girls always needed to negotiate which ways of being a girl were acceptable in a new context. The girls' negotiations were usually observed within peer culture. The institutional emphasis on free-play and child-centeredness allowed the girls time and space to organize girls-only or girls-dominant groups. Within voluntarily organized girls-exclusive contexts, they collectively explored and examined various aspects of being a girl by occasionally drawing on ideas that were related to adult lives. Frequently, the girls' negotiations tried to maintain the three constructions as the local norm. But there existed some quietly subversive girls. This of course created conflicts. When an individual or a group of girls suggested different ways of being a girl, other girls began policing. To avoid becoming subject to policing, some girls were reserved about their subversive ideas.

The dominant girlhoods were frequently maintained by the girls as the more desirable, valuable, and appropriate ways of being a girl. First, the girls maintained a certain way of being a girl as they shared similar practices with their peers. For instance, an individual girl's experience of being in a wedding ceremony provoked the following marriage talk. They shared the meaning connected to a wedding ceremony or marriage, as well as similar experiences. The shared practices or ways of being contributed to the

formation of a collective girlhood. Next, the girls maintained the dominant girlhood by giving favorable comments to other girls who performed conformist practices. Min-ju's exclaiming, "What a pretty rabbit," of Hae-in's new hair band, valued Hae-in's construction as a girlish girl and encourages Hae-in to adhere to a particular way of being a girl. Also, the girls in the local setting maintained the dominant girlhoods by directing each other to correctly position themselves in the dominant girlhoods. When a girl took an errant position from the dominant girlhoods, the girls urged her, sometimes implicitly, to reposition herself. Sung-woo's retort to Soo-jin, "Science?" is one example. Although Sung-woo was not inclined to play in the science center, she did not make a big fuss. Many girls in the research setting guided and supported each other to construct themselves in terms of appropriate girlhoods.

Some girls, on the other hand, made no bones about their opposition to certain practices. They devalued, criticized, and marginalized what fell outside their notion of dominant girlhood. Consequently, the policing that followed solidified the dominant constructions of girlhood. As appears on page 239, when the girls talked about firefighter play, So-jung immediately criticized Na-young's deviancy and marginalized Na-young's ambiguous way of being a girl. Assertive and confrontational policing was meant to define other girls' practices as inappropriate and to pressure other girls into correcting their deviancies.

Some girls of Ms. Jung's class exposed their invalidation of other girls' practices only when they were together with intimate partners. Indeed, girls' gossip about You-min's body and other girls' appearances were conducted in more private settings. The

princess syndrome was also more readily invoked in private settings. The inconsistency of girls' behavior between public and private settings seemed to suggest that they were trying to look like good girls. Many studies on adolescent girls' meanness mention that girls are not allowed to express certain attitudes toward others in public (Meten, 1997). One might imagine that these young girls were maintaining their images as good girls in public by carefully managing themselves in terms of what they verbalized and expressed.

Despite the prevalence of the three constructions of girlhood, an individual girl or a group of girls still searched for alternative ways of being a girl. In the local setting, these girls' subversive negotiations did not cause explicit changes in the dominant constructions of girlhood. But, like Raby (2006), I insist that some of the girls' negotiations multiplied and diversified the local girlhoods through making invisible, unheard, and marginalized possibilities of being a girl visible, heard, and central. To this extent, I perceive these negotiations as subversive.

Through their subversion of the locally dominant girlhoods, the girls expanded the narrow scope of possibilities bestowed on them. Instead of copying the dominant way of being a girl, the girls drew on an alternative idea of being a girl and consequently multiplied and complicated the dominant image of girlish girls. In the research setting, the collective and explicit resistance toward the dominant image of a female body in Korea was witnessed in the girls' chanting, "Gain some weight, you skinny body." Invoking individual rights, So-jung, Jun-hee, and Jung-min repudiated the oppressive practices imposed on female bodies. Moreover, they boldly mocked the dominant image

of a slim body. In a different context, Jun-hee was defiant with Yoon-su who tried to devalue her stable and steady relationship with a boy.

However, this type of explicit subversion was not allowed every girl in the local setting. In many cases, the girls, wishing to avoid outside pressure, were quietly subversive. As discussed on page 240, Tae-yun kept secret her indifference to one of the girls' favorite cartoons because other girls wouldn't be able to understand. Such a strategy led adults to be oblivious to girls' subversive way of being a girl.

The girls' negotiations frequently occurred at the intersections of their two conflicting subject positions: girls vs. students and girls vs. children. Sometimes taking one subject position, girls resisted the constructed girlhoods or searched for alternative girlhoods that could resolve the tensions caused by the two subject positions. Yoon-su's girlish girl practice of wearing pierced earrings was disdained by other girls who saw it as inappropriate. Notwithstanding their desire to be pretty girls, they stuck to the child side of the child/adult binary. Similarly, Min-ju and Na-young on page 274, also distanced themselves from heteronormative girlhood by positioning themselves as children. Constructions of alternative girlhoods were seen in the practice of wearing bottom-covering garments. Dealing with the tension between the subject positions as a pretty girl and as a kindergartner, the girls of Ms. Jung's class modified their bodily practices by adding an additional garment. They also modified bodily practices in negotiating the institutional guideline of "comfortable clothing." Depending on their strategies in dealing with the tension between being a pretty girl and being a female student, the alternative girlhoods were varied.

In answering the second research question, I closely examine how the constructed girlhoods were negotiated in the research setting. The three constructed girlhoods were challenged and reconstructed through the girls' discursive negotiation. Within spontaneously organized girls-exclusive groups during child-led activities, the girls talked about what were the available and acceptable possibilities of being a girl for them. In addition, a context with less adult intervention allowed them to explore beyond what society usually assumes. While the girls negotiated, the three constructions of girlhoods were frequently maintained as the local norm. Also, these girlhoods became more dominant and regulatory over the individual girls' daily practices. Subversive negotiations among girls brought complexities to and multiplications of girls' practices of constructing girlhoods. From my perspective, the girls' multiple subjectivities seemed to stimulate subversive negotiation. To resolve the conflicts that originated from different subject positions, the girls altered their practices. That is, subversive negotiations of girlhoods among the girls generated a space where the girls could multiply and contradict many facets of girlhoods

Reflections on Inconsistencies with the Previous Literature

Some of the findings from this study are inconsistent with those referred to in the literature of the ECE field. I explain the inconsistencies embedded in the local girls' practices in several ways with respect to contextual differences and methodology.

First, the variance of the girls' constructions of girls in the local setting from the mainstream Korean and Western ECE gave me pause more than once. Searching for

working accounts of the inconsistencies in the local girls' practices, I gradually paid more attention to the local context in which the girls constructed girlhoods. It was in this way that I came to grasp the causes for the girls' inconsistent constructions of gender. For instance, unlike Western girls' passive participation in physical activities, the Korean young girls did not shy away from them, even when in skirts. The local setting without the type of playground equipment that risks exposing one's underwear may explain this. Also, more significantly, I interpret that an additional garment under skirts to properly cover girls' underwear allowed the girls to organize their girlhood in a way different from Western girls. This understanding regarding the (empowering) impact of inner pants on girls' participation in physical activities leads me to appreciate the contradictory function of a bottom-covering garment.

The adopted methods for exploring young girls' constructions of girlhood generate this study's inconsistency with mainstream Korean ECE literature. The most visible incident of the girls' inconsistent practices from mainstream literature was found in their resistance to a feminist story. Many Korean studies claim that anti-bias storybooks modify young children's stereotypical gender/sex role perceptions; I observed the opposite. The girls in the local setting resisted a feminist story and wished to position themselves within the romantic relationship. In other words, they subverted the suggested way of being a girl in *Paper Bag Princess* only to fall back on familiar heteronormative practices. This may have stemmed from my method of conducting the interview. First of all, the close relationship between the researcher and the students seemed to make them comfortable with revealing their understanding of "gender right, gender normal, and

gender best" (MacNaughton, p. 104). Also, in order to provoke the children's thinking, I gave the children a chance to modify the ending. Given the context, the young girls thus felt free enough to resist an authorized feminist text.

Reflections on Inconsistencies as the Writer

Since beginning this study, my hope as a researcher and writer has been to create a seamless story about Korean girls. There have, of course, been problems in achieving this. First of all, the embedded complexities and contradictions in girls' lived practices were a source of trouble. I regarded the multiplicity of gender to be a jigsaw puzzle. In other words, I rather expected that I could put the pieces of Korean girlhoods together by careful reading and critical thinking. However, what I observed in the research setting was not at all like a jigsaw puzzle. Girls' lived practices often did not fit together, easily. Amid the many ill fitting and contradictory sorts of behavior, I surrendered the goal for a seamless narrative.

In addition, my own shifting positionalities disrupted my expectation to achieve the imaginary seamless narrative. I could not keep myself separate from the girls' lived experiences. Therefore, as I began to understand the local girlhoods in the research setting, I considered again my own childhood memories and current practices as an adult female. My growing understanding of myself as a female is one reason for my struggle to write. Occasionally the tensions occurring at the intersection among my multiple positionalities contributed inconsistencies of their own to this text. Certain of the girls' practices—oppressing or silencing girls who were different, for example—conflicted

with my feminist subject positions. My subject position as a researcher conducting an exploratory study is central to this study. Nonetheless, my feminist voice breaks through occasionally.

Finally, my relationship with the participants became slightly problematic. In order to highlight the dominance of disciplinary knowledge in the practices of an individual teacher, I adopted a different style of presenting the findings as I related to the institution' and to the teachers' practices. I described them differently from the way I described the young girls. Furthermore, compared to describing early childhood girls as active players in their daily practices, I tended to speak of the teacher as being controlled and regulated by the ECE discipline. As I stated in the section of my positionalities, this would be the consequence of my desire for protecting the on-going relationship with the teacher.

Implications of the Study

In this case study, I explored constructed girlhoods and girls' negotiation of them. I benefited from conceptualizing gender as a social construction; I moved beyond unitary, static, and consistent notions of gender. This allowed me to capture multifaceted constructions of girlhood—even contradictory ones. It weakened the strongly perceived connection between young children and innocence and development. Conceptualizing young children as active players, I adopted several data collection methods that let me glimpse what they think about gender and how they perform it in their lives. The findings foreground girlish girlhood, oppositional girlhood, and heternormative girlhood. These

until now have been regarded as insignificant, natural, or nonexistent by mainstream ECE literature. I thus wish to point out some implications for Korean early childhood practices, dominant early childhood practices, and future research.

Implications for Korean Early Childhood Practice

I present several implications for Korean early childhood practices in connection with early childhood teachers and the Korean national curriculum published by KMEHR. These implications include the need to reconsider the significance of young children's gender, the need to diversify the current body of knowledge regarding young children's gender, and the need to create a "dialogic classroom community" as a safe and tolerant space for young children.

As stated in earlier chapters, the gender of young children has been ignored in the Korean ECE field. The invisibility of gender in the *6th Edition of Korean National Curriculum for Kindergarten* (1998) implies much about how gender is discussed in Korean early childhood practice. This case study reveals, however, that girls' lived practices in the local classroom are constructed by a variety of gender-related materials, conversations, behaviors, and desires. The findings indicate that gender mediates girls' classroom practices as students and is also the force behind their taking a position in opposition to boys. Seeing fully how gender operates in the classroom lives of young children, I expect, will expand and deepen the current understanding of young children. Also, it provides a new starting point for creating gender equitable practices for young children.

The findings also suggest the need to diversify the lens through which young children's gender is appreciated and researched. Currently, Korean ECE practices have established a discussion about the gender of young children founded on a narrow range of studies that are informed by the socialization perspective. Also, as the *Guidebook for Gender Equality Program* (KMEHR, 2005) demonstrates, by conceptualizing children as passive sponges, the Korean early childhood practice adopts simplified strategies for reforming young children's sexist practices. However, the findings of this study illustrate a complexity to young children's gender and to their resistance to certain expectations of being a girl. In order to capture unnoticed aspects of young children's gender, the Korean ECE practices need to widen and deepen the current body of knowledge by diversifying theoretical frameworks on the gender of young children. I suggest that the social constructionist perspective is one alternative. Additionally, pre-and in-service teacher education programs could be modified based on alternative frameworks.

Next, the findings of this case study propose that the Korean field needs to expand the scope of the gender discussion to the current gender binary and the power relations in it (Blaise, 1997; MacNaughton, 2000; Walkerdine, 1990). Influenced by developmentalism, the Korean ECE field pays attention only to the individual child, classroom teacher, and kindergarten, not the underlying structure of children's practices. The way Ms. Jung understood girls' silence in classroom discussion showcases disciplinary concentration. By maintaining silence on the gender binary and its attendant power relations, the current gender equality discussion sends conflicting and contradictory messages to young children. For instance, the guidebook explicitly supports

children's non-stereotypical gender roles, but implicitly demonstrates its acceptance of the current gender system. From my perspective, the current re-socializing strategies are not enough to bring long term change that will enact gender equity in the early childhood setting.

Finally, I propose creating a "dialogic classroom community" (MacNaughton, 2000, p. 124) in early childhood settings in order to multiply and diversify the possibilities of being a girl or a boy. Ms. Jung in this research project established a dialogic classroom community by directly participating in the girls' constructions of girlhood. Ms. Jung disagreed with the narrow way of being a girl. Furthermore, she put invisible, unheard, and marginalized ways of being at the center of classroom discussion. This allowed room for girls to explore gender without fear of being criticized, marginalized, and pathologized.

Implications for the Dominant ECE Field

The findings of this case study also have a number of implications for the dominant ECE field. One major implication is the influence of locality, particularity, and specificity on Korean girls' constructions of gender. I insist that the dominant ECE field needs to broaden its vision toward young children by including more local girlhoods. I report a couple of practices inconsistent with or invisible in the dominant ECE literature. The locally constructed girlhoods in H kindergarten raise questions about the body of knowledge of young children's gender in the mainstream ECE field. Some previous studies on young girls in cultures other than white middle class girls raised similar

questions (Corsaro, 2005, Corsaro & Molinary, 2005; Connolly, 2000). In order to establish a more inclusive understanding of young girls, the dominant ECE needs to include contextually bound knowledge of young girls.

The findings of this study reveal the paradoxical impacts of child-centeredness on an individual teacher's participation in young girls' constructions of girlhoods. Ms Jung's practices suggest that an individual teacher is trapped between her critical consciousness and the legitimized way to perform a teacher's role. Several studies informed by the social constructionist perspective have already suggested a need to take a closer look at child-centeredness in early childhood settings (Alloway, 1995; MacNaughton, 2000; Robinson & Díaz, 2006). I think that a critical examination of child-centeredness would lead to a reconstruction of the teacher's role of performing "a communal responsibility for fostering social justice" (Robinson & Díaz, 2006, p. 158).

Implications for Future Research

A future study needs to observe young girls in a different setting. The findings of this study are about the constructions of girlhood shaped and mediated by the local institutional setting. Observing them in more varied settings, such as family, neighborhood, voluntarily organized peer groups, and mixed-age groups, and so on, is necessary.

Also, the findings imply a need for a longitudinal study. While I was in the research setting, there were several incidents that indicated a need for a year-long observation. The dynamic between the girls' team and the major chasers, for example,

cannot be fully explained by one semester's worth of observation. Additionally, considering the fact that girls are often protected and reserved in a public setting (Connolly, 2000; Boyle et al., 2003; Hey, 1997; McRobbie, 2000), a longer observation may allow a researcher better opportunities to be invited into girls' private conversations.

Finally, a future study needs to consider a more holistic approach to young children's gender. Gender, a fundamental aspect of any individual's subjectivity, should not be isolated from other aspects, like class, ethnicity, nationality, physical ability, and age. I tend to totalize and/or simplify young children's gender by disconnecting gender from other aspects of subjectivity. Also, hoping to capture in-depth meaning and to avoid an unconscious comparison between the two gender categories, I observed only girls. The findings of this study, thus, may be partial and fragmented. In consideration of this, future research needs to pay attention to how every member participates in local constructions of girlhood (Connell, 2002).

There are several implications for future research from the findings of this study. First of all, a future study could explore commercialized girlhood by looking at a variety of merchandise and pop culture items. According to Morrow (2006), although marketing and children's consumption are highly gendered and even reinforce stereotypes, commercialized girlhood has been discussed little, especially with early childhood girls. I frequently saw young girls' absorption of commercialized cultural items or texts in peer culture. Accordingly, the constructed girlhoods in the local kindergarten classroom included some unimagined facets from the mainstream ECE field. Commercialized girlhood was noticed not just in girls' appearance. Daily conversations among the girls

were often centered on new merchandise and cultural texts. At a time when they are a target of large corporations, it seems useful to consider how young children construct girlhoods while interacting with commercialized projections of how to be a girl. However, the current research project does not give enough weight to commercialized or even post-colonized aspects of Korean girlhood. Pursuing this direction in future research would reveal much about childhood in a highly advanced consumer society like Korea. In addition, as Morrow (2006) suggests, the intersection between gender and social class on this topic needs to be closely examined.

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